THE ARMOR OF LIGHT

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THE ARMOR OF LIGHT

SHORT SERMONS

ON THE EPISTLES
FOR
EVERY SUNDAY IN THE YEAR

BY

THE REV. J. J. BURKE

Author of "Characteristics of the Early Church," "Reasonableness of Catholic Ceremonies and Practices," "The Great Problems," and "The Church in Many Lands."

WITHDRAWN

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To The Great Apostle of the Gentiles, Distinguished by his virtues and his eloquence,

From whose inspired writings more than forty of the Sunday Epistles are taken,

Whose love for God and his fellow man are conspicuous in his Letters,

Whose words have been the delight and consolation of thousands of souls in every age,

Whose tireless energy and fiery zeal in building up God's Church are the wonder and inspiration of all who labor in the Lord's vineyard,

THIS BOOK

IS

HUMBLY AND ADMIRINGLY
DEDICATED

By The Author.

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PREFACE

The Armor of Light is God's grace enlightening our mind, and moving our will to avoid evil and do good. The subject of the first sermon suggests the title of this book, for all these sermons dwell upon the necessity of avoiding evil and leading a good Christian life.

After the celebration of Mass and the administration of the Sacraments, the great duty of the priest is to preach. Few priests use a sermon just as it is written by another. The principal object of a sermon book is to suggest. Each man has his own way of presenting a subject.

Centuries ago Ecclesiastes said: "Of making many books there is no end." If this was true then, it is even truer now and may be applied to sermon books.

While the making of sermon books seems to have reached the limit, books of short sermons on the Sunday Epistles are rare. It is hoped that this fact, namely, that they are on the Epistles, as well as the further fact that they are short, will add to the usefulness of the sermons contained in this book, and that they will be as well received as was "The Great

Problem," a sermon book on the Gospels written by the author a few years ago.

The sermons are five or six minute sermons for low Mass. They are each divided into two points and can be easily extended to fifteen or twenty minutes, or one point can be used as a three minute sermon.

In these sermons the writer has aimed at expressing religious truths with brevity and clearness.

Should they be the means of leading only one person to "Cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light"—to avoid evil and do good—the work of preparing them will be amply rewarded.

THE AUTHOR

Peoria, Ill., Sept. 1, 1925.

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I

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

THE ARMOR OF LIGHT

"Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light." (Romans XIII, 12.)

THE Epistle to the Romans, from which the epistle for the first Sunday of the ecclesiastical year is taken, while not the first of St. Paul's letters in the order of time, is, perhaps, the first in importance. Rome, the imperial mistress of the world, was wielding a great power over the minds of men. Her word was law, her law was inexorable, her morals were detestable. The church, for some time established within her walls, was beginning to acquire some prominence. It was the work and the See of St. Peter.

Paul hesitated about entering what he considered the province of Peter. In this letter he is careful not to claim for himself the rôle of founder or evangelist of the Roman Church. But as Apostle of the Gentiles, and deeply interested in them, he wrote the Romans about the most important truths that could occupy the attention of man—justification

by faith in Jesus, doing good works, avoiding evil, redemption, and the powerlessness of fallen man to rise by his own efforts.

I

In today's epistle, taken from the thirteenth chapter of the Letter to the Romans, St. Paul asks them to put "off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light." Among the works of darkness he enumerates various sins and vices, such as dishonesty, quarreling, drunkenness, and impurity.

The armor of light is God's grace, accompanied by good works. We put on the armor of light when we lay aside vice and practice virtue, when we avoid evil and do good, when we are truly converted to Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Although no day of our lives should pass without firm resolutions of amendment, without acts of true contrition, without putting on the armor of light, and endeavoring to be truly converted to Our Lord Jesus Christ, the holy season of Advent, which we begin today, is especially set aside for this purpose by the Church.

During Advent the Church reminds us in various ways of the necessity of repentance and conversion. The violet color of the vestments reminds us of penance. The epistles, the gospels, the prayers in the Mass for the various days of Advent, warn us of our duty to put off the works of darkness and to

put on the armor of light, to avoid sin and to do good.

Will we listen to these warnings? Will we prepare properly for Christ's coming at Christmas? Or, will we close our minds and our hearts to His many warnings and constant reminders?

If we listen to the warnings and heed the reminders, the works of darkness, sin and vice, will no more find place in us. We will cast them aside and put on the armor of light, the grace of God, and practice virtues pleasing to Him.

II

From time to time God's warnings are sounded, yet the vast majority of men heed them not. Like the diners at Balthasar's banquet, we go on with our merry-making, unmindful of threats, reminders, and warnings.

Balthasar was king of Babylon. His capital was a magnificent city, one of which any king might feel proud, and inside whose walls he might well feel secure.

One beautiful night in the year 538 B. C. Balthasar was in his glory. He was surrounded at a banquet in his palace by one thousand of the principal lords of his realm. Everything was passing pleasantly, when Balthasar sacrilegiously took the sacred vessels which his father had brought from the Temple of Jerusalem, filled them with wine,

and after drinking from them himself, made his officers drink from them.

That God whom he had so frequently insulted, that God who had suffered so much with meekness and patience, could not allow this new insult, this awful outrage, to pass with impunity.

Balthasar suddenly becomes silent, turns pale, trembles violently, and looks with horror towards the wall. All are struck with consternation at the sudden change in the King's behavior and, looking in the direction towards which his eyes are turned, they see a hand gliding along the wall and writing three words in the Chaldaic language: *"Mane, Thecel, Phares."*

No one knew what these words meant. The King sent for Daniel. Daniel was one of the Jews who had been taken prisoner in Jerusalem the previous year and was kept in captivity at Babylon. He was one of God's prophets and a learned man; hence Balthasar sent for him to interpret the mysterious and awe-inspiring words.

Daniel said to Balthasar: "O King, your crimes have reached their height, and the hour of God's vengeance is at hand. It is His hand that has traced those words. *Mane* means that He has counted your days, and the end has come. *Thecel* means that He has weighed you in the balance of his justice, and you have been found wanting. *Phares*

means that He has divided your kingdom and given it to the Medes and Persians."

This terrible prediction was speedily fulfilled. That very night, while they were still at the feast, Cyrus the Great, king of Persia, entered the city and with one blow put an end to the life of Balthasar and of his kingdom.

This terrible calamity which befell Balthasar and the people of his kingdom is typical of the judgment day, of which we are reminded on the first Sunday of Advent, and also of our last day, when God will count our days, weigh our actions, and treat us according to our deserts.

St. Paul ends today's epistle by saying: "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." He "puts on Christ" who imitates Him. Let us not imitate the Babylonians and ignore the hand-writing on the wall, but let us listen to God's warnings, put off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light by avoiding evil and doing good, by laying aside vice and practicing virtue. "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ," and practice virtues pleasing to Him.

II

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

THE CHURCH—THE GUARDIAN OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

"What things soever were written, were written for our learning." (Romans XV, 4.)

Last Sunday we saw the necessity of properly preparing for Christ's coming by putting off the works of darkness and putting on the armor of light, by avoiding evil and doing good, by co-operating with the grace of God. By this grace we are members of the true Church. We can never give God sufficient thanks for this great privilege. When we remember how many millions of human beings in the world are still in the darkness of paganism, when we consider what our fathers had to endure for the faith, and when we reflect upon the truth, the beauty, the antiquity, and the universality of our holy religion, then we can not but be lost in admiration for the wonderful goodness of God, who brought us into the bosom of the true Church. We should continually thank Him for this great favor and ask him for the grace to be tolerant of the beliefs of others and do what we can, by word and example,

to lead them into the portals of that Church which Christ founded for the salvation of all.

I

When St. Paul in today's epistle, which is taken from the fifteenth chapter of his Letter to the Romans, says: "What things soever were written, were written for our learning," he means that if we do not draw from Holy Scripture peace, knowledge, patience, and consolation, it is our fault and not the fault of Holy Scripture. No heretic ever existed who did not try to prove his teachings from the Bible.

The Pharisees in our Lord's time distorted the meaning of the Scriptures and substituted their own arbitrary teachings for the truths of revelation. They rejected the teachers of truth, stoned their prophets, and put to death the great Teacher, the Light of the world, the Redeemer of all mankind.

Like the Pharisees, all the heretics of the Christian era claimed a Biblical foundation for their erroneous teachings. The Arians claimed that the Bible did not teach the Divinity of Jesus Christ. The Pelagians denied original sin and the necessity of grace, and based their errors on the Bible. Nestorius taught that there are in Jesus Christ two persons, thus denying that Mary is the Mother of God.

Luther and other modern heretics quote the Bible

in proof of their teachings and practices. Private interpretation is the cause of countless evils. The Bible teaches the truth. Man distorts its meaning. We need a teacher, an interpreter of the Bible, on whom we can rely.

II

The Church is the divinely appointed teacher of Christ's truth and the official interpreter of Holy Scripture. The Bible is the Word of God. But the Bible needs an interpreter. God never intended it to be the Christian's rule of faith without an authoritative voice telling us its meaning.

The Bible is to the Christian what the Constitution is to the American citizen. If citizens have difficulty in interpreting the law, the affair is taken into court, where the judge decides what is the meaning of the law. All must abide by this decision or appeal to a higher court. The decision of the Supreme Court ends all controversy.

What the Supreme Court is to the Constitution, that the Pope and the bishops are to the Bible. The Catholic Church preserved the Scriptures for us; she tells us which books belong to the Bible and which do not, and she has been the sole guardian of the Scriptures for 1500 years.

The Bible as a mere book can not be a guide to Heaven. A guide to salvation must be: 1st, within the reach of every inquirer; 2nd, a competent re-

ligious guide, showing us the way clearly and intelligibly; and 3rd, able to instruct in all the truths necessary for salvation.

The Bible was never within the reach of all; in fact for 1500 years very few had access to it; it is difficult to understand and does not contain all the truths a Christian is bound to believe.

"What things soever were written, were written for our learning," provided we use properly the things set down in Holy Scripture. Let us ask God for the grace to use the Holy Scripture properly, so that by diligent study, earnest meditation, and devout prayer we may believe and do all that the Bible teaches and commands, as made known by its divinely appointed interpreter, the Holy Catholic Church.

Believing and doing what the Bible teaches, as made known to us by the Church, we will hate error and love truth, abhor evil and try to save the fallen. Following the example of the Master, we will be kind, charitable, and forgiving. This will give us consolation in our trials, patience in our sufferings, peace of heart, joy of spirit, and a desire to thank, praise and bless God forever and ever.

III

(8 DECEMBER)

FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

"The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his ways." (Proverbs VIII, 22.)

Of the six holydays of obligation which the Church bids us to celebrate in the course of the ecclesiastical year, three are in honor of Our Divine Lord, two in honor of His Blessed Mother, and one in honor of His special friends—all the Saints in Heaven. The three in honor of Our Divine Lord are the feast of His birth (Christmas), His Circumcision (New Year's Day) and His glorious Ascension into Heaven.

Her immaculate Conception and her Assumption into Heaven are the two holydays of obligations which we celebrate each year in honor of Mary.

I

Today, the 8th of December, we celebrate the feast of the Immaculate Conception. The Catholic Church teaches that Mary, through the merits of

her Divine Son, was preserved from the stain of original sin; that sin never contaminated her fair soul.

The feast of the Immaculate Conception commemorates the greatest honor, the most precious favor that God ever conferred upon a creature.

The Immaculate Conception does not mean that Mary never committed actual sin. The Church in her early years declared that Mary never sinned. Nor does it mean that Mary always preserved her virginity; for the Church always taught that she was a Virgin before and after the birth of our Saviour! It means that the Mother of God was conceived without the least stain of original sin.

II

"Blessed art thou among women" (Luke I, 28). The Angel Gabriel said to Mary Blessed above all women, blessed above the Saints in Heaven is Mary, the Immaculate Mother of God.

Mary, the Mother of God, is our spiritual mother. A good man rejoices when any mark of respect or honor is shown his mother. Therefore, how great should be our joy today as we commemorate the glorious privilege of our spiritual Mother, her Immaculate Conception, which is dearer to her than all the other honors God has bestowed on her.

The Immaculate Conception is the greatest honor that God conferred upon Mary. She alone of all

the descendants of Adam, was preserved from original sin.

The cause of this distinction, of this great honor, was that Mary was destined to become the Mother of the Saviour of the world. The Immaculate Conception is a jewel of inestimable value, a prerogative of incomparable worth.

Let us rejoice on this glorious feast because God has so singularly favored the Mother of our Saviour and our own Blessed Mother. Let us resolve to please her and her Divine Son by endeavoring to preserve the purity of our hearts. And let us ask her to obtain from Jesus the favor of having her as a guide in life, a consolation in death, and a companion for all eternity.

IV

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

SPIRITUAL JOY

"Brethren, rejoice in the Lord always." Philippians, IV, 4.)

As the birthday of our Saviour approaches, the Church seems more earnest in asking us to rejoice. She wishes us to recall all we owe to our Divine Lord, and when we carefully consider these benefits, we can not but be filled with joy, thanksgiving, and love.

I

In the fourth chapter of his Letter to the Philippians, from which this day's epistle is extracted, St. Paul exhorts those whom he addresses to be joyful. "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say rejoice. Let your modesty be known to all men. The Lord is nigh."

The joy which St. Paul desired these early Christians to have, and which we too should endeavor to have, is a spiritual joy and gladness based on the fact that God has called us to the true faith and given us hope of eternal salvation.

We follow the advice of St. Paul and let our "modesty be known to all men," if we lead a good life and place all our confidence, desire, and our hope in God, asking Him not to abandon us, but to fill us with that joy, peace, and tranquillity of soul which sustained the martyrs and consoled all those who have ever suffered for Christ and his cause.

The Philippians loved Paul, who was the founder and first pastor of their Church. They manifested their love for him by kindness and by gifts. Paul's primary object in writing this Epistle was to thank them. He tells them how greatly he loves them, and how ardently he desires them to attain perfection by the practice of their holy religion.

While thanking the Philippians the Apostle also praises them for their care for him. Moved by love and his gratitude, he manifests a keen solicitude for their spiritual welfare. He is desirous that their moral conduct should be formed upon the precepts of the Master. Finally he prays that they may co-operate with grace and live holily, and that God may keep their "hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord."

II

If Christians would follow the advice which St. Paul gives in today's epistle, they would be models of every virtue. With their "minds and hearts in Christ Jesus," they would love their neighbors,

not only those who are of the household of the faith, but also those who live outside the fold.

Tolerance is the mark of the true Christian. From the very beginning the Church has been the victim of intolerance. The early Christians during the various persecutions were subjected to the most frightful torments, which they bore with patience and joy.

Notice the patience and joy of St. Paul under trials and persecutions. Notwithstanding the severest beatings and imprisonments, he was ever filled with gratitude to God and with spiritual joy, crying out as he does in today's epistle: "Rejoice in the Lord."

The glorious triumph of St. Lawrence is a notable example of spiritual joy under a most intolerant ruler. He was cruelly put to death during the persecution of Valerian, August 10, 258.

Lawrence was one of the seven deacons of Rome under Pope Sixtus I. He had charge of the treasury of the church and also looked after the widows and the orphans. Being summoned before the tribunal of the emperor and ordered to give up the treasures of the church, he distributed all his possessions among the poor.

Afterwards he collected the poor, the sick, the widows and the orphans and brought them to the authorities, declaring that they were his treasures. The prefect was so enraged at this that he ordered

Lawrence to be put to death by slow degrees. A great gridiron was prepared, a hot fire made under it, and Lawrence roasted over this fire until his flesh was broiled. After some time, the holy martyr, full of spiritual joy and Christian patience, said to the judge: "Let my body be turned around; one side is broiled enough."

Although enduring the most excruciating pains, St. Lawrence continually prayed to God for patience and resignation. He seemed to be filled with joy and peace and love for all mankind. His heroic example caused many conversions. The Church celebrates his glorious triumph each year with joy, thanksgiving, and devotion.

What a noble example of spiritual joy under most adverse circumstances!

The joy of the worldly is wickedness. The joy of those who love God is virtue. Rejoice in the Lord, not in the world. Rejoice in truth, not in falsehood; in justice, not in injustice; in eternal life, not in temporal advantages. There is one sure way of always conquering evil, and that is constant imitation of St. Paul, "keeping your minds and hearts in Christ Jesus," and meditation on His sufferings for us, which is the source of spiritual joy.

V

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

OUR FAITHFUL FRIEND,— THE PRIEST

"Brethren, let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ." (I Cor, IV, 1.)

A FAITHFUL friend is one of the greatest blessings in life. Nothing can be compared to him. He is a treasure whose value is beyond estimation.

In every parish there is one who is the friend of all, the poor as well as the rich. He will counsel you in doubts, defend you when unjustly treated, aid you when in trouble, grieve with you in adversity, and rejoice when you prosper. This faithful friend is the priest.

I

When St. Paul in today's epistle, taken from the fourth chapter of his First Letter to the Corinthians, says, "Let a man account of us as ministers of Christ and dispensers of his mysteries," he asks the faithful to love their priests and hold them in high esteem because they are "ministers of Christ."

Christ chose the priest, that he might obtain for himself life's highest good and, in return, confer this good upon his fellow man. Christ chose the priest to aid Him in the work for which He came upon earth. What a noble mission! What a great dignity!

To aid Jesus Christ in saving souls, to teach men the truths of salvation, to loose them from their sins, to offer the Eucharistic Sacrifice for them, to pray for them, to minister to them, and to shower them with heavenly blessings—this is the work, this is the high mission entrusted to the priest by the Great High Priest and Saviour of our souls.

The farewell words of Our Saviour to His Apostles, who were the first priests, as recorded in the twenty-eighth chapter of St. Matthew, were: "All power is given me in heaven and on earth. Going, therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world."

The Apostles, then, according to the will of Christ were to teach with His power and authority; they were to teach all nations, and they were to continue this work through their successors to the end of time.

We learn from the fourteenth chapter of the Acts

of the Apostles that Paul and Barnabas, after instructing the people of Iconium and Lystra for some time, ordained priests for them in every church. We learn, too, that Paul consecrated Titus bishop of Crete, that he might ordain other bishops and priests, thus perpetuating the ministry.

The priest, then, is the ambassador of God, commissioned to do His work by His authority. He is the minister of Christ continuing the work for which Christ came upon earth. And he is the organ of the Holy Ghost for the sanctification of souls. The greatness of the sacerdotal dignity will be known only in Heaven. St. Paul knew it and that is why he asked the Corinthians to love their priests and hold them in highest esteem.

II

If the dignity of the priest is great, his duties and responsibilities are heavy. Christ said to the Apostles and to their successors, the bishops and priests of the Church: "As the Father sent me, I also send you (John xx); He that heareth you heareth me; Teach ye all nations; I am with you all days." These words of our Divine Lord indicate not only the great dignity, but also the important duty and responsibility of the priest.

In the affairs of eternity the priest is all important. He stands at the altar of God where he offers the body and blood of Christ entrusted to him for the

people. He is empowered to sit in the tribunal of penance and say to the penitent: "Thy sins are forgiven."

When you start out on the voyage of life, the priest blesses your union. Through his ministry at the baptismal font your children are made heirs of Heaven. Later he instructs them and trains them to be good Christians and dutiful citizens. He prepares them to receive the Bread of Life. If they go astray, he is the good shepherd ready to lead them back to the fold. When they are dying, he prepares them to make that last great journey and after they are dead, he offers the Holy Sacrifice and the prayers of the Church for the repose of their souls. From the cradle to the grave the priest is ever ready to perform Christ's work for the people.

The greatest of all missions is to devote one's life to alleviate the sufferings of mankind. Jesus Christ has said: "Greater love than this no man hath, that he give his life for his fellow man." This the good priest is every ready to do. When duty calls, he is not even afraid of death, because he has left all things for Christ and, as St. Paul says, being without a wife, "is solicitous about things of the Lord."

To devote one's life to the instruction of others is a benefit second only in importance to devoting

one's life to the alleviation of sufferings. For 1900 years this has been one of the great works of the priests of God's Church. To teach, to preach, to forgive sins, to offer the Holy Sacrifice, to administer the means of santifications—these are the duties, these the responsibilities of the priests of God's Church.

Seek where you will, you can not find a body of men so renowned for wisdom, justice, and holiness as the popes, bishops, and priests of the Catholic Church of every age, from the time of its foundation by Jesus Christ until the present time.

VI

CHRISTMAS DAY

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

"The goodness and kindness of God, our Savior appeared." (Titus III, 4.)

Of all the festivals of the ecclesiastical year, there is none that fills the hearts of Christians with such feelings of joy, thanksgiving, and love as the glorious feast of Christmas. Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, whose birth we commemorate today is the center around which all history revolves. In Him everything begins, in Him everything ends. He is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the one true and only Being, who always was and always will be. He is loved, honored, and adored everywhere and at all times.

I

The Church founded by Jesus Christ fills time and space with His name. She knows Him, she loves Him, she adores Him. She lives in Him, and He in her.

She teaches with an infallible voice that He is the Son of God made man; that, being conceived

by the Holy Ghost, He was born of the Virgin Mary, and having suffered and died, arose from the dead, ascended into Heaven, whence He will return to judge the living and the dead. She teaches that we owe Him a debt of adoration on account of His omnipotence, of love for His providence, of thanksgiving for His benefits, and that we must live in peace and harmony with all mankind.

The teachings of Our Saviour and of His Church have civilized and Christianized the world. Where can you find a benefactor compared to Him? Frequently during the course of the year we are called upon to celebrate the anniversary of some statesman, general, or benefactor of mankind. If we enter upon such celebrations with feelings of pleasure and patriotism, what should be our feelings of joy, thanksgiving, and love today, when we celebrate the anniversary of the greatest benefactor the human race has ever had or ever will have?

II

Jesus Christ is the greatest name in history. The greatest person that ever existed on this earth was the Son of God. The greatest event that ever occurred on this mundane sphere was the birth of the Redeemer of mankind.

What pleasure would it not give us to visit the place of His birth! As we cannot visit Bethlehem in body, let us go there in spirit.

A few years ago I stood on a hill in the eastern part of the little city of Bethlehem and gazed long and lovingly toward the East, where centuries ago Ruth gathered the wheat in the harvest field of Booz. It is one of Judea's most fertile spots, a beautiful, picturesque place, where, one thousand years after Ruth, the shepherds were tending their flocks in the night of the Saviour's birth.

Shepherds tend their flocks on the hillside today just as they did 1900 years ago. Like the shepherds of old, they still go to the grotto where Jesus Christ was born, reverently adore the Divine Infant in the place of His nativity, pour forth their feelings of joy, thanksgiving, and love, while listening, as their brothers did 1900 years ago, to the angelic hymn, "Glory to God in the Highest, and on Earth Peace to Men of Good Will."

After meditating some time on the mysteries connected with the spot where the poor shepherds stood when they heard the angels sing I hastened to the Holy Grotto of the Birth, in the north part of the Church of the Nativity, and celebrated the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass on the very spot made glorious forever by the Birth of the Saviour of Mankind. What a rare privilege! What holy thoughts and memories were awakened—thoughts and memories that will remain forever.

Our hearts and minds today are filled with sub-

lime thoughts and holy feelings. They are centered on heavenly things, on the Divine Infant, and on that far-off land along the eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea made sacred by the Saviour's Birth. Let us go in spirit across oceans and continents to that interesting land and learn some valuable lessons from the Divine Infant.

Let us learn from Him the virtues of kindness, humility, purity, patience, resignation, faith, hope, and love, and let us ask Him for all the graces and blessings we stand most in need of. After receiving Holy Communion, after the Divine Infant has come into our hearts, and before leaving this church, let us fervently pray and implore the Prince of Peace that peace, prosperity, and good will may take the place of warfare, poverty, and strife over all the world, that faith, hope, and love may be enthroned in the hearts of all men, and that all may enjoy in their fullness the graces and blessings of this holy Christmas season.

If you have kindness and love in your hearts for all, the Divine Infant will shower His blessings upon you, and each and every one of you will have a Happy and a Holy Christmas.

VII

SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

OBEDIENCE

"But when the fullness of time was come God sent his Son." (Gal. IV, 4.)

God is our Heavenly Father, hence we pray to Him: "Our Father who are in Heaven." God created us and gave us everything that we possess. This is why we are subject to Him and owe Him obedience, love, reverence, and adoration.

God gave us our parents to love us, to guide us, to educate us, and to provide for us.

If it is our duty to love, to obey and to adore God, it is also our duty to love, respect, and obey our parents for His sake.

When St. Paul in today's epistle, taken from the fourth chapter of the Letter to the Galatians, says, "Brethren, as long as the heir is a child he differeth not from a servant," he indirectly refers to the Chosen People. The Jews were like children under the servitude of the Old Law; but God

sent His Son, that He might redeem them, that they might receive the adoption of sons.

I

No father hands over his inheritance to his son while the child is under age. The boy is too young to handle it in a prudent and sensible manner.

The parable of the Prodigal Son shows the wisdom of prudent fatherly action.

In this story the frivolous, disobedient son insists on receiving his portion of his father's property before the proper time. Having received it, he went to a strange land, led an evil life, and wasted his wealth. His money gone, deserted by his false friends, he became a servant to a hard master. In hunger and want he was compelled to eat the husks thrown to the hogs to save himself from starvation.

Hunger, trouble, and sorrow chastened him. Thoroughly repentant, he returned to his father's house, confessed his evil deeds, was forgiven, and entered once more into his rights as a child.

This story can be applied to the Jews; it can also be applied to disobedient children.

The Jews were the chosen children of God and heirs of the graces purchased by the Redeemer. Through disobedience and apostasy they lost this inheritance. For their disobedience and stubbornness, God punished them in many ways. Wars, pestilence, famine, plagues, were among the means

employed by Him to awaken the conscience of the Chosen People, to make them realize their lost inheritance, and to prepare them for the coming Redeemer.

II

From the parable of the Prodigal Son we learn the beauty of obedience. It is of the true servant of God, the obedient child, that St. Paul says: "Therefore, now he is not a servant but a son, and if a son, an heir also through God." The son and heir should be obedient to the law of God, which is a law of love.

As all good children of God are obedient to the law of God, so all good children obey their parents, who hold the place of God.

"Children," says St. Paul, "obey your parents in all things, for this is pleasing to the Lord."

Children should love, respect, and obey their parents. The love they owe their parents knows no decrease or dispensation. They should love them as long as they live, try to please them always, and assist them in their needs. If the parents are poor and infirm, they should be even more devoted to them.

Good children respect their parents as the representatives of God, by showing them honor, speaking to them with kindness, and receiving their corrections with respect.

God wills us to obey our parents as we would obey Him. We obey them in a Christian manner when we cheerfully and promptly do what they command us to do. Our faith teaches that parents and superiors are invested with the authority of God; hence, when we obey them in all that is just and proper, we obey God Himself.

Obedience has been a characteristic virtue in the lives of all good and great men. The duty of loving, respecting, and obeying his parents was a marked feature in the life of that holy martyr, Blessed Thomas More. This trait was noticeable from his earliest years. When he attained one of the highest positions in England, his love and respect for his parents increased rather than diminished. Although holding a higher worldly position than his father, it is said that Thomas went every morning to ask his father's blessing.

It is well for children to remember that there is no surer way to happiness, here and hereafter, than to love, respect and obey their parents for the love of God.

VIII

NEW YEAR'S DAY

THE CIRCUMCISION

"The grace of God, our Savior, hath appeared to all men." (Titus II, 11.)

ANOTHER year with its trials and its triumphs, its sorrows and joys, its failures and successes, has been added to the past. It is gone forever. We are on the threshold of a new year. God grant that it may be for every one of us a happy, prosperous and holy year.

I

If the year we are beginning is to be for us a prosperous, happy, and holy one, it will be necessary to review the past. By reviewing the past in the light of the faith we shall find the cause of our trials, sorrows, and failures. And when we have discovered that cause, let us resolve to avoid everything that caused them.

There are people who scoff at good resolutions. They forget that no one ever accomplished anything praiseworthy without making a good resolu-

tion. The scoffers will tell you that the infernal regions are paved with good resolutions. This may be true, but they were resolutions that were not kept. Heaven, too, is filled with good resolutions—resolutions that were faithfully kept.

There is not a successful man, there is not a good citizen, there is not a true Christian who does not owe his success as a man, as a citizen, and as a Christian to good resolutions faithfully adhered to.

If, then, in reviewing the past year you find that you have not been doing your duty as a man and a citizen, resolve to do better. If you find that you have not been saying your prayers regularly, that you did not attend Mass every Sunday, that you did not receive the Sacraments frequently, that you did not keep all the commandments of God and the church, and that you did not attend to all your duties as a citizen and a Christian, resolve to begin to do better today—faithfully keep this resolution, and you will have a Happy New Year.

II

A Happy New Year! What a beautiful thought and sentiment. To the Christian, what an appropriate greeting!

This year will be a happy new year to every Christian who enters it with a firm resolution to do his duty at all times. For he alone is happy who does his duty.

At the opening of a new year I know of no better advice for young and old than that contained in the couplet:

"Do thy duty, that is best
Leave unto the Lord the rest."

By co-operating with the grace of God, you will do your duty, keep your good resolutions, and save your soul.

"The grace of God, our Saviour, hath appeared to all men."

IX

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

OUR GUIDE—THE ONE TRUE CHURCH

"We, being many, are one body in Christ." (Romans, XII, 5.)

THE world is full of temptations and dangers for the Christian. The alluring voice of wealth leads many astray, while the enticing sound of revelry turns the minds of youth from elevating thoughts to worldly pleasures. Irreligious writing, atheistic teaching, attractive gambling establishments, immoral amusements, dangerous dancing, the flowing bowl, and suggestive shows are among the tempting allurements of the world against which St. Paul warns us when he says, "Be not conformed to this world."

I

In today's epistle, drawn from the twelfth chapter of the Letter to the Romans, St. Paul, after telling us not to be conformed to this world, indicates the way in which we are to be reformed in the newness of mind and prove what is the good,

the acceptable, the perfect Will of God, namely, submission to the teaching of the Church, which he calls the "one body of Christ."

"For as in one body we have many members, but all the members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ." In the one body, the one true Church, Jesus Christ is the head, while the Pope is the visible head on earth, and the members are all those who are united with Christ by faith and the Sacraments.

If we are brothers of Christ and children of God, we must make an offering of ourselves, body and soul, to God and renounce the world with its treasures and pleasures. Humility and charity bind the members of God's Church together in harmony and unity.

Unity is a distinguishing mark of the Church and was so from the very beginning. St. Paul's last prayer, like that of the Master, was a warning against dissensions and schisms. Writing to the Ephesians, he emphasizes this unity which the true Church should have, when he speaks of "One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all."

That is, as there is but one God, one Mediator, one Sanctifier, and but one heavenly kingdom, so there is but one faith and one Church, teaching the truths of Divine Revelation.

Our Saviour's last words included a prayer for

unity. "I pray for them also who through their word shall believe in Me, that they all may be one as thou Father in Me and I in Thee." These words clearly express the thought that, as the Father and the Son are one in essence, so the members of the Church should be united in faith and charity, in order that all may be one in Christ Jesus and that unity of faith and government may be a characteristic mark of the true Church of God.

II

God is one in essence. He is the God of unity and peace, not of dissension and schism. There is unity in all His works. If there is unity in all His works, there must be unity also in His Church. This thought, the necessity of unity, has led many into God's Church.

Some years ago a professor in one of our colleges became a convert to the Catholic Church. For some years he had been changing from one church to another in his efforts to satisfy his conscience, but none of the non-Catholic churches satisfied him. Finally he drifted into infidelity. But infidelity, too, failed to satisfy his active intellect. He knew there was a God, and his reason told him that God must be loved, served, and adored. He knew that if God had instituted a church, it must possess that unity characteristic of all his works. He had tried many of the non-Catholic churches, but found they

lacked unity of faith and government. He had not tried the Catholic Church. He was accustomed to look upon that Church with contempt and did not dream that it could be the true Church of God. His mind troubled him, and finally he decided to consult a priest.

He told the priest that he was in search of the true religion. There is unity in all God's works, he said; there is unity in the vegetable kingdom, unity in the animal kingdom, unity among the heavenly bodies, and if God had established a church, it must possess that unity characteristic of all His works. He had tried the Protestant churches, and none of them possessed this unity, and he wondered if that Church which he had been taught to despise, had this necessary mark of unity.

The priest assured him that the Catholic Church, and it alone, possessed unity of faith and government. From the very beginning She had taught the same doctrine everywhere. The Pope was her head. Under him were the archbishops, bishops, and priests who, like the officers in an army, executed the orders of the general. The Pope was the head and center of unity, the pilot appointed by Jesus Christ to guide the bark of Peter. His voice, like the star of Bethlehem, led men to Jesus.

As the Magi followed the Star until it led them to Jesus, let us follow the teaching of the one true

Church of God, our Star of Bethlehem, our guide to the feet of Jesus. Following the Star, the Magi overcame dangers, trials, and temptations, until they reached the Holy City.

Following our guide, the one true Church of God, we shall overcome the trials, dangers, and temptations of the world and at last reach our Heavenly Home.

X

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

THE LOVE OF GOD

"Let love be without dissimulation . . . serving the Lord." (Romans XII, 8.)

TODAY'S epistle, taken from the twelfth chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, inculcates the great virtue of the love of God. The whole Christian life is summed up in the love of God. For if a person loves God with a true, interior love he will be kind, humble, sincere, honest, and true.

I

To love God is the end of our existence. God made us to love Him. Love is gained and supported by love, hence St. John says: "Let us love God, because God first loved us."

God showed His great love for us by creating us in preference to so many millions of possible beings whom He might have brought into existence, and who would have given Him a greater love, a greater honor than we have rendered Him.

He manifested His great love for us by sending

His only begotten Son to redeem us after we had turned our backs on Him to wander along the paths of sin.

Again He gave a proof of His love for us by leaving His Church to continue His mission of leading souls to Heaven.

Never did a mother love her infant with such tender affection and sincere devotion as God loves each one of us. He makes Himself our companion, our food, and our heavenly reward.

Surely one who loves us so tenderly deserves to be loved in return with our whole mind, with our whole soul, and with all our heart. We should return Him love for love. Our love should manifest itself in acts rather than in words. Our Divine Lord has said: "If any man love me he will keep my word," *i.e.,* he will not break the commandments.

There is a perfect union of wills between two persons who love each other. We know God loves us; let us show by our lives that we love Him.

II

We ought to love God more than anything and everything in the world—more than our families, more than wealth, fame, honors, and high position.

St. Peter gives us an example of how we should love God. After His Resurrection our Lord appeared several times to His disciples. At times he

manifested Himself under peculiar circumstances. One day St. Peter, St. Thomas, and a few other disciples were together on the shore of Lake Genesareth, when Peter said: "I wish to go fishing this evening." "We shall go with you," the others replied. They entered their little boat and fished all night, but caught no fish.

In the morning, when they rowed their boat near the shore, they saw Jesus standing on the bank of the lake. At first they did not recognize the Master. He asked them if they had any fish. They told Him they had fished all night, but had caught nothing. He told them to cast their net on the right side of the boat. When they did so they caught a large number of fish. Then John whispered to Peter, "It is the Lord."

Having brought the fish to shore and made a fire, they prepared their morning meal. After breakfast Jesus said to Peter: "Peter, lovest thou Me?" "Yes, Lord, I love You." "Feed my lambs." A second time He asked: "Peter, lovest thou Me?" "Lord, thou knowest that I love Thee." "Feed My lambs." After some time Jesus asked a third time: "Peter, lovest thou Me?" Peter felt hurt because he thought the Master doubted his love, and he exclaimed with much force and earnestness: "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee." And Jesus said: "Feed My sheep."

This is how we ought to love God. We ought to

tell Him and prove it by our actions. We ought to show it by leading a good Christian life.

If we could understand the depth of God's love for us, we would endeavor to have a greater love for Him.

Do we love God as St. Peter did? Do we often tell God that we love Him? Do we prove our love for Him by our good deeds? De we love God as the Saints and martyrs did? Are we willing to suffer for His sake? What are we willing to undertake and to undergo for God? That is a practical test of our love. He loves much who is willing to suffer much.

Love of God is the essence of religion. The whole of the teachings and commandments of the Church may be summed up in this brief sentence: "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God."

O God, give us the grace to understand and the strength to keep the great commandment of the law: "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, and with all thy mind."

XI

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

THE LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOR

"Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good." (Romans XII, 21.)

THE love of our neighbor is intimately connected with the love of God. We cannot love God and hate our neighbor. Love of God comes first, love of our neighbor next. By our neighbor is meant every human being. We must love all men for God's sake because He created all to His image and likeness, and His only begotten Son died for all.

I

First of all we must love our parents, our brothers and sisters, wife, husband and children. We do not love them if we continually quarrel with them. We do not love them if we wish them evil.

Parents, love your children. Give them a good example. See that they receive a good education. Provide adequately for their needs.

If it is the duty of parents to love their children, give them a good example, and provide for their spiritual and bodily wants, it is the duty of chil-

dren to love their parents, obey them, and assist them at all times.

If the proper education of children forms the principal duty of parents, and constitutes their great responsibility before Almighty God, the proper love, respect and obedience of children forms their great duty to their parents and their principal responsibility to Almighty God.

Good, loving, obedient children will receive God's blessing, while bad and disobedient children will be punished here and hereafter.

II

Love of our neighbor includes not only our family and friends, but also our enemies. St. John, the beloved Apostle, gives us an example of the love we should have for our neighbor—for everyone. St. John, as is well known, lived longer than any other Apostle. When he was about 99 years old and could no longer walk, he had to be carried to the Church. The people always wanted to hear him, though on account of his great age he could not speak long. Sunday after Sunday, St. John repeated the words: "My little children, love one another."

Growing tired of hearing the same words all the time, some of His disciples asked Him why he always preached the same sermon. "My children," he said to them, "If you love one another, you keep the whole law of God."

Let us love one another. Let us love our neighbors with a true, genuine love,—a love springing from the heart, a love that prompts us to do unto them as we would have them do unto us.

The one who loves his neighbor will not seek revenge, but will forgive as he expects to be forgiven.

We are told that, after the death of the Arian Emperor Valens, some of the faithful desired to take revenge for the many acts of injustice committed against them by the Arians. St. Gregory Nazianzen rebuked them and said: "My dear people, Christ does not sanction revenge, and the Gospel does not teach it. Let this be your revenge, that you assist in the salvation of those who injured you. Confer benefits on those who hate and persecute you. Leave revenge to Christ. 'Revenge is mine; I will repay, says the Lord.' "

When St. Paul tells us in this day's epistle, "Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good," he asks us to repay injuries by benefits and malice by love.

Let us endeavor to do this. Let us endeavor to love those who hate us, to do good to those who injure us, and to bear our trials without complaint.

Love is as old as religion, as old as man. "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with thy whole heart, with thy whole strength, and with thy whole mind,"

was whispered into Adam's ear in the Garden. Shortly afterward, when Eve was formed, and two of the same race stood together midst Eden's bowers, God spake to the hearts of both: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Do this and thou shalt live.

XII

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY OR TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE LAW OF LOVE

"Love, therefore is the fulfilling of the Law." (Romans XIII, 10.)

THE Old Law was a law of servitude, a law of revenge, a law of hate. The New Law is a law of freedom, a law of forgiveness, a law of love. In the Old Law the injured person was taught to render evil for evil, hatred for hatred, to demand an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth; but in the New Law we are taught to render good for evil, to love our enemies and to forgive injuries.

I

Today's epistle, taken from the thirteenth chapter of St. Paul's Letter to the Romans, emphasizes the distinction between the Old and the New Law, and ends by telling us that love is the fulfilling of the Law.

In the Old Law people were treated as children and as slaves. They were taught to seek revenge,

to return evil for evil, and to hate their enemies. The punishments meted out to transgressors of the law were often unjust and unreasonable. All transgressors seemed to be given the same punishment. The blasphemer, for example, was taken outside the city walls and stoned to death. A similiar fate befell the murderer, the adulterer, and other public sinners. There seemed to be no method of dealing with the great numbers of private sinners. One of the consequences of this was the sect of Pharisees.

The Pharisee thought he was better than other people. Puffed up with pride, he arrogated to himself virtues he did not possess and tried to elevate himself in the estimation of men by doing all he could to lower and degrade others. "I am not as the rest of men," was what he thought, and what guided his actions. Feeling that he was better than others, naturally caused him to exalt himself and to despise others. Pride is the source of many sins, whereas humility, its opposite, is the foundation of virtue. The Pharisee in his pride despised the poor publican, who on account of his humility was justified in the sight of God. Another Pharisee condemned Magdalen, whose humility made her a Saint.

Another consequence of the method of punishing transgressions in the Old Law was fear. The people were restrained from vice more by fear of punishment than by hope of reward. It is true

they were commanded to love God, but fear was the predominant feature of their worship. The Christian is commanded to fear to offend God, but love is the motive drawing us to God.

II

The Old Law, then, is a law of fear, a law of hate, a law of revenge. The New Law is a law of forgiveness, a law of freedom, a law of love. The essential characteristic of the religion of Jesus Christ is love. All the Commandments of God, the precepts of the Gospel, the teaching of the Apostles and of the Church, may be summed up in the one word, Love.

The whole law is fulfilled by love, or, as St. Paul says, "Love is the fulfilling of the Law." Love is the shortest road to virtue, the safest path to eternal salvation. Love is the essence of Christianity. "Thou shalt love thy Lord, thy God"; "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

If we love God with a true, genuine affection, we shall love our neighbor for the love of God. We should love God because God first loved us. He manifested His love for us in many ways: by creating us in preference to so many millions of possible beings whom He might have created and who would have given Him a greater love than we give Him; by sending His own Divine Son down from Heaven to redeem us when we had turned our

backs on Him by refusing to love Him, by committing sin; and by leaving His Church as His representative on earth to show us the way to Heaven. No mother ever loved her child with as deep a love as God has for each one of us. Why should we not love Him? If we love Him, we shall show it by our good lives—lives of honesty, purity, uprightness, love towards our neighbor.

Love makes men live for God. Christ dying on the Cross, with His arms extended to embrace all men as brothers, is an example of the universality of love. We should love every man of every race, color, and creed. This does not mean that we may not love some more than others. While Christ loved everyone, He especially loved His dear Mother, innocent little children, Mary, Martha, Lazarus, the Apostles, and particularly St. John, His favorite disciple.

From this disciple we may learn a beautiful lesson of love. He is called "the disciple whom Jesus loved." John was particularly loved by the Saviour on account of his innocence, his purity, and his amiable disposition.

If Jesus loved John with an especial affection, John on many occasions manifested an especially tender love for the Master. He reclined on the Master's breast at the Last Supper; while at the crucifixion he stood by the Cross with Mary, the Mother of Jesus. The others sought safety by

flight, but the beloved disciple showed the depth of his love by witnessing His death and sharing in the ignominy of the Crucifixion. John's entire life was an exemplification of love of God and love of all mankind.

Love God, my dear friends, with a filial love, as your Father. Love Him as your Creator and Benefactor. Love Him and His Divine Son as Peter and Magdalen and Augustine did with a repentant love. Love Him as the Saviour who died that you might live love. Love God above all things and love your neighbor for the love of God. "Love is the fulfilling of the law." The law of God, the law of Christianity is "The Law of Love."

XIII

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

OR

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

FORGIVENESS OF INJURIES

"Bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if any have a complaint against another. Even as the Lord hath forgiven you, so you also." (Col. III, 13.)

FORGIVENESS of injuries is one of the most important duties of the Christian. It is also one of the most difficult. Other acts of mercy and kindness do not seem difficult to perform; but if one has injured or insulted us, it seems an act of cowardice not to resent the insult. On the contrary, it is an act of weakness to resent the insult and one of courage to forgive. To forgive injuries is both reasonable and necessary.

I

Our Divine Lord asks us to forgive from our hearts all the injuries we have received from others. We expect God to forgive us, why should we refuse to forgive our fellow men? It is reasonable to for-

give. The desire of revenge is an animal passion. Brutes seek revenge because they have no reasoning faculty to curb their passions. Man has reason. He is able to conquer himself, to curb his passions and to forgive injuries. Revenge is weak and cowardly; forgiveness is manly and courageous. This truth was acknowledged by the pagans. Aristotle, Seneca, and others speak of the weakness and cowardice of revenge.

Seneca says that only the weak desire revenge, whereas the manly man considers the desire of revenge beneath his dignity. Aristotle tells us that it is the sign of an immature mind not to be able to bear an unkind act or a harsh word.

All the great and good men of ancient and modern times acknowledged the reasonableness of forgiveness of injuries. Joseph's brothers committed a most unkind, injurious act against him. First attempting to kill him, they afterwards, prompted by jealousy, sent him into exile. A greater injury it is difficult to conceive. But the generous, courageous, and manly Joseph forgave the injury and showered benefits on those who had injured him.

When St. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, was stoned to death, he forgave his enemies, saying, "O Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." We should not allow pagans to surpass us in virtue. Forgiveness of injuries is especially a Christian virtue. It

is just, it is honorable, it is reasonable to forgive injuries and return good for evil.

II

It is not only reasonable to forgive, but it is absolutely necessary. Perhaps revenge is the most un-Christian of vices. Revenge will make our salvation impossible, while its opposite, forgiveness, is a necessary condition of salvation.

Although the pagan philosophers recommended forgiveness of injuries, they did so from a purely human standpoint. For the Christian forgiveness of injuries is founded on Christian charity.

The philosophic virtue is not the same as the Christian virtue. The works of humanity are not the same as works of charity.

From the parable of the king and the servants in the eighteenth chapter of St. Matthew we see that forgiveness of injuries is necessary for salvation. The king forgave one of the servants a great debt, and when this servant left the king's presence he met another servant, who owed him a small debt, and he demanded payment. The poor servant begged for time, which not being granted he was cast into prison. When the king heard of the incident, he had the merciless servant punished.

The king in this parable is our Lord; we are the servants. God has forgiven us time and again, as

the king forgave the merciless servant, but we are forgiven only if we forgive.

If we refuse to forgive others, God will not forgive us. No forgiveness in life, no forgiveness in eternity. For, "So shall my heavenly Father do unto you, if you forgive not, every one his brother from your hearts."

Who can look upon the sublime spectacle of the Saviour of the world dying on the Cross and with His dying words of forgiving His enemies, His murderers, saying: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do," and still refuse to forgive his enemies?

Let us follow the example of Jesus Christ. Let us imitate the Saints and martyrs of all ages and forgive everyone, no matter what he may have done.

Our reason tells us to forgive everyone. The noblest impulse of our hearts prompts us to forgive. The love and friendship of God here and hereafter demand that we generously forgive all our enemies.

"Even as the Lord hath forgiven you, so you also."

XIV

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

OR

TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

PERSECUTORS

"And you became followers of us and of the Lord; receiving the word with much tribulation." (1 Thess. I, 5.)

THE first epistle St. Paul wrote was the one addressed to the Thessalonians, from which today's lesson is taken. Thessalonica was the capital of Macedonia, a European country north of Greece. After St. Paul had preached the Gospel and converted many Jews as well as Gentiles there, he was compelled to leave the city by the unbelieving Jews, who were incensed on account of his success. From Thessalonica he went to Athens. Here he heard that the Christians of Thessalonica were severely persecuted. Fearing that some of them would lose their faith under the trials and persecutions of the enemy, St. Paul sent Timothy to comfort and strengthen them. After preaching some time to the Athenians and converting many, St. Paul went to

Corinth, from which place he sent his Epistle to the Thessalonians.

I

In today's epistle St. Paul praises the Thessalonians for their good conduct and their strong faith. The flourishing church he had established among the Thessalonians excited the envy and hatred of the Jews, who began a violent persecution against the Christians, and drove Paul out of the city. Notwithstanding the most violent persecution, the Thessalonian Christians remained steadfast in the faith. Hence they deserved the praise of St. Paul, who said to them: "Brethren, we give thanks to God for you all, making a remembrance of you in our prayers without ceasing, being mindful of the work of your faith, and labor, and charity, and of the enduring of the hope of Our Lord, Jesus Christ."

In these words of the Apostle is comprised the whole Christian life. By practicing the virtues of faith, hope, and charity, the Thessalonians became faithful followers of St. Paul and of the Divine Master. They kept away from idolatry. They constantly lived in the presence of God and were ever ready to fight and to die for Christ and His Church. Hence, when persecution came, they bore their trials with patience and Christian resignation.

II

The Jews persecuted St. Paul and the Thessalonians. The Jews were the first persecutors of the Christians. Having crucified the Master, they waged a relentless warfare against His disciples. They forbade them to preach, cast them into prison, scourged them, and put them to death. They stoned St. Stephen until he died, murdered St. James, the first Bishop of Jerusalem, and sent St. Paul in chains to Cesarea. The persecution during which St. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, was put to death, occurred one year after our Lord's crucifixion.

During this first persecution of the Christians by the Jews two thousand Christians were put to death. The Jews continued their persecution from time to time, until the year 70, when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Roman Emperor Titus. The Romans not only destroyed the city, but killed thousands of its citizens, carried many away into captivity, and scattered the remainder.

The persecutions waged by the Jews against the Christians were insignificant when compared with the cruel and widespread Roman persecutions. During the first three centuries of Christianity, the Roman emperors waged a cruel and relentless warfare against the Christians. We know of ten general persecutions, besides many that were confined to certain localities. History names ten em-

perors as the principal persecutors, namely; Nero, Domitian, Trajan, Hadrian, Marcus Aurelius, Septimius Severus, Maximian, Decius, Valerian, and Diocletian. The persecutions continued until the fourth century, when Constantine, the first Christian Emperor, was converted.

During these persecutions all the powers of earth and of the infernal regions united and tried to destroy the Church. Nevertheless Christianity grew, extended, and expanded, while the proud Roman Empire was destined to destruction.

The spirit of faith, hope, and charity which St. Paul praised in the Thessalonians, upheld them in bearing trials and persecutions. This same spirit of faith, hope, and charity animated the Christian martyrs of the early Church, and strengthened them in their warfare for God and humanity.

Let us ask God to breathe into our minds and hearts the same spirit of faith, hope, and love, so that, in imitation of the Thessalonians, we may bear with patience and resignation all the trials, and persecutions, sorrows, and sufferings of the world, and merit the crown of glory.

XV

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY

THE CROWN OF ETERNAL LIFE

"They, indeed, that they may receive a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible one." (1 Cor. IX, 25.)

From today, Septuagesima Sunday, until Easter we meditate particularly on the trials and sorrows of this world, while after Easter our thoughts are directed to heavenly joys. This Sunday's epistle reminds us of the hard labors endured and earnest efforts made by the worldlings in order to gain earthly rewards, and of the little trouble they go to to gain the crown of eternal life.

I

Many spend their time, thought, and efforts in trying to gain the things of this world. They think not of the future. Worldly desires, temporal pleasures, and fleeting treasures occupy their attention. Though professing religion, their hearts and minds are not centered on God, but on the world. The prize they are racing for is not an eternal, but a temporal one. In their daily lives the earthly

prize comes first, while the heavenly prize is neglected or relegated to the background.

If a man neglects his business or his material interests, he is considered foolish or a poor business man. Our most important business is our eternal interests. How foolish we are if we do not use the same care and preparation in seeking our nearest and dearest eternal interests that most men use in securing their material interests!

II

Like St. Paul, the true Christian should strive earnestly and fight manfully to gain the incorruptible crown. He should take no chances in a matter of so much importance. Eternity of joy or of sorrow depends upon whether we fight for the crown of eternal life, or fold our arms, rush blindly towards the precipice, and fall into the abyss before we realize that we have been acting "as one beating the air."

In the Olympian games of which St. Paul speaks in today's epistle, many athletes entered as competitors in the foot races. Before entering the contest, they were compelled to undergo the strictest discipline. Their diet was coarse and plain, and they were compelled to abstain from everything that might prevent them from winning the victory. The winner received the crown of victory.

We Christians, too, have entered a race. If we

win, we shall receive an incorruptible crown, the crown of eternal life. If the contestants in the Olympian games abstained from eating and drinking and from everything that might prevent them from winning a perishable crown, should we not be willing to lead a life of self-denial and obedience to God's laws, in order to win the imperishable crown of everlasting life?

Self-denial and obedience to God's laws are necessary for all who wish to win the crown of eternal life. St. Paul tells us that he "chastised his body and kept it under subjection," lest he should lose the incorruptible crown. If it was necessary for St. Paul and the Saints to practice self-denial and penance, do we expect to gain the victory by any other way than that pointed out to us by their teaching and example?

Let us not forget that we are all contestants in the race for heaven, for the crown of glory. Let us resolve to frequent the Sacraments, to keep the Commandments, and to abstain from everything that would injure us in the race. Let us practice self-denial, co-operate with God's grace, and do all that is required to fit our bodies and souls for the victory.

Having done all that is required, having prepared earnestly and prayerfully for the contest, we may rest assured that we shall win the race and obtain the Crown of Eternal Life.

XVI

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY

PAUL, THE VICTOR

"Gladly will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me." (2 Cor. XII, 9.)

After St. Paul had labored for some time in Corinth and founded a flourishing church there, he went to other places to continue the good work. Scarcely had he gone, when enemies of Christianity tried to destroy all he had done. To counteract the evil influence of these false teachers, Paul wrote his Second Epistle to the Corinthians. To stop their boasting, he mentions his trials and sufferings as well as the extraordinary favors bestowed upon him by Almighty God.

I

Born at Tarsus, in Cilicia, Western Asia, about ten years after the birth of Jesus, Saul learned the trade of tentmaker in his youth. Later he studied the law and the prophets from the various books of the Old Testament at Jerusalem. Gamaliel, the

most learned rabbi of the time, was his teacher. He joined the sect of Pharisees and took a leading part in the persecution of the Christians. When St. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, was stoned to death, Saul was an active witness and helper of that cruel deed. While on a mission of persecution he was suddenly converted. The ninth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles records this wonderful event.

Saul was going to Damascus to search for Christians when Christ appeared to him in a miraculous manner. "And as he went on his journey it came to pass that he drew nigh to Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shined around him. Falling on the ground, he heard a voice saying, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?' Who said, 'Who art thou, Lord?' And He, 'I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.' Trembling and astonished, he said, 'Lord what wilt thou have me to do?' And the Lord said, 'Arise and go into the city. There it shalt be told thee what thou must do.' "

When Saul arose from the ground, he was blind. He made his way as best he could to the city, and remained there for three days without food, praying for pardon and mercy. Finally, on the third day, God sent the priest Ananias to instruct and baptize him. Saul received back his sight and obtained the light of faith at the same time. Saul, the bitter

foe of Christians, became Paul, the most zealous supporter of Christianity.

II

After his conversion Paul spent about a dozen years in solitude, prayer, and study and then began his missionary career. He traveled thousands of miles on land and sea to spread Christ's kingdom on earth. He endured untold hardships. He suffered from shipwreck, from imprisonment, from beating, and, finally, was put to death. His death was a victory for the faith.

Paul contributed more than any other man to carry the faith far and wide. Thousands, persuaded by his eloquence and power, gave their lives to further God's glory. Idols went down before him, and the Cross of Christ was erected in their place.

St. Chrysostom says: "Paul, the world-famed hero, was victorious in every kind of combat." In his zeal he went to many lands, and labored more earnestly every day. From every assault he emerged a victor. Caring not for this world, he endured with joy injustice, poverty, and suffering.

In his love of suffering and mortification he closely resembled his Master. He says: "With Christ I am nailed to the cross."

But the crowning virtue of St. Paul, the cause of all his victories over self and over men, was his intense love of God. On account of this great love

of God he joyfully endured trials, overcame obstacles, and suffered persecutions.

Saul bitterly persecuted Christ before he knew Him. Paul, converted to the faith, ardently loved Christ and His Church.

"Who," he says in his Epistle to the Romans, "shall separate us from the love of Christ—neither death nor life—nor any other creature shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

XVII

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY

CHARITY

"And now there remain faith, hope, and charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." (1 Cor. XIII, 13.)

TODAY'S epistle may be called a "Song of Charity." Seek where you will, you cannot find the virtue of charity more beautifully and practically inculcated than in the thirteenth chapter of St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians.

I

Charity is the characteristic virtue of the Christian. One of the most attractive features of the early Christians, which caused the conversion of countless pagans, was the mutual love existing among the followers of the Redeemer. Love, charity, is the fulfilling of the Law. The Saviour's own life was one of sacrifice, one of service, one of charity.

If we expect to meet our Saviour in Heaven, we must imitate His life of charity. Do we do this? Or are we unkind and uncharitable in our thoughts,

words and deeds? Charity thinketh no evil, and when we hear unkind things said, we should not readily believe them.

Our charity should extend to all men, of whatever race, color, or creed. It should not be limited to our family, our friends, or the members of our society or church. Charity is universal and should extend to every one.

After the Master, St. Paul is the greatest teacher of charity. Paul's life, like that of the Master, was one of sacrifice, service, charity.

We should endeavor to imitate this life of sacrifice and service. No matter how many sacrifices we make, no matter how we mortify ourselves, no matter how great our services to mankind,—if we have not charity, we are nothing, we gain nothing for eternal life.

Charity is a true, genuine love. It is patient and kind. "God is Charity, and he that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him." (1 John IV, 16.)

II

If we practice kindness and charity towards our neighbor, and direct our hearts to Heaven, we possess true charity. Possessing true charity, we shall avoid sin, and especially those sins that are particularly opposed to charity—anger, hatred, and jealousy.

Anger may be righteous at times, as was, for example, the righteous indignation of Our Lord when He found the money-changers desecrating the Temple. Parents and superiors are sometimes justified when they become indignant at the faults and vices of those over whom God has placed them. But the sin of anger, is a great evil. Since Cain lifted his hand against his brother Abel, millions of men have been killed in war on account of the anger of kings and princes.

What unhappiness, what misery, what woe is caused families by unchecked, angry passions! Much of the misery in the world is traceable to anger. What a paradise this world would be if all followed St. Paul's advice to be patient and kind! "Charity is patient, is kind."

Hatred, like anger, is a great sin. It is a violent dislike for a person and often includes the wish that some evil may happen to the one we hate. As it is our duty to love God and our neighbor, hatred is directly opposed to Christian charity. St. John tells us: "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer." (I John III, 15.) Hatred is a child of anger. If we can curb our anger, hatred will disappear. "Charity is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil." (I Cor. XIII, 5.)

When a feeling of hatred enters your mind, remember Him who forgave His murderers. "Father, forgive them."

Jealousy, or envy, is a feeling of sadness at another's good fortune or prosperity. On account of our pride we think that we should be the recipients of the good things possessed by those whom we envy. Envy breeds hatred, anger, avarice, and revenge. It causes the envious person to be miserable, occasions much suffering, and often leads to murder and other grievous sins.

Charity,—love of God and of our neighbor for God's sake,—is the cure for anger, hatred, and envy. For "Charity is patient, is kind,—is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil."

Faith will pass into sight, hope will end in possession, but charity will abide forever. For God is charity. "Now there remain faith, hope, and charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."

XVIII

THE FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

THE ACCEPTABLE TIME

"Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation." (2 Cor. VI, 3.)

God is always ready to shower His gifts upon us. There are, however, certain times when we are exhorted to exert ourselves with greater zeal for our spiritual progress. The most important of these times is the holy season of Lent, upon which we are just entering. During this time, by fasting, prayer and good works we should atone for past sins and prepare our hearts for God's choicest gifts and blessings.

I

The holy season of Lent is a special time of grace. It is the "acceptable time." Grace will be conferred upon us in proportion to our preparation for it. Lent is especially set apart for preparing for the great feast of Easter.

Prayer, fasting, almsgiving are the special penitential works recommended to us during this holy

time. We are also recommended to abstain from worldly amusements and give our time and attention to serious thoughts. During Lent people should give up dancing, card-playing, theater-going, and other amusements which, though not sinful in themselves, are apt to occupy the mind and prevent it from dwelling on important eternal truths.

Perhaps the most important work the Church insists upon during this acceptable time, this time of grace, is the worthy reception of the Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist. In this era of frequent Communion it might seem to some that this is not so necessary. But at present, as in all ages, there are many lukewarm Catholics who need an urgent reminder to fulfill the obligation of receiving the Sacraments.

As wanderers in a wilderness, who have lost their way in seeking first after one beauty of nature and then after another, can not find their way back without a sign or warning of some kind; so we, who are wanderers in the wilderness of the world, often lose our way while seeking earthly beauty or pleasure, and need a warning voice to recall us to the right path and to remind us from time to time that, "now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation."

II

Lent should be a time of penance, prayer, and special grace for all Christians, priests and people.

In today's epistle St. Paul mentions some of the virtues which the true follower of Christ should possess, and which he should endeavor to acquire or increase during this holy time. He mentions particularly patience, chastity, and charity.

First, patience. There is no virtue more necessary for priest or people than patience. It wins men's hearts. It attracts men as honey attracts flies. How patient was St. Paul in all his trials, tribulations, and sufferings. "In stripes, in prison, in seditions, in labors, in watchings, in fastings," in sorrow and persecution he was patient and kind like his Master. What a valuable lesson we can learn from this example of the great Apostle,—a lesson of patience in our trials and difficulties, and in all our dealings with our fellow men.

The next important virtue mentioned is chastity. The chastity practiced by St. Paul, and other Saints and ministers of God, consists in abstaining from every kind of bodily lust. The priests and religious of God's Church have practiced this virtue from the early ages of Christianity. Imitating the Master, the Apostles and founders of the Church led celibate lives. Religious celibacy is one of the causes why the Catholic priest, like St. Paul, is ready and willing to undergo dangers, overcome difficulties, and expose himself to death in its most hideous form for his fellow man. When duty calls him, he does not fear trials or death, because, as St. Paul says,

"He who is without a wife is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord." While celibacy is the special privilege and duty of priests and religious, all Christians are bound to observe purity in thought, word, and deed.

Another important virtue mentioned by St. Paul is charity. This virtue is so important, so fundamental, that the Apostle mentions it again and again, sometimes devoting large portions of an Epistle to its necessity.

Let us enter upon this holy season of Lent with the right disposition. Let us pray more fervently, give alms more freely, and practice acts of mortification more willingly. By performing these good works and by receiving the Sacraments worthily, we shall obtain the grace to practice all virtues more perfectly, especially the virtues of patience, chastity, and charity. Then Lent will be for us truly "the acceptable time—the day of salvation."

XIX

THE SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

IMPURITY

"This is the will of God, your sanctification, that you should abstain from fornication." (1 Thess. IV, 3.)

God wills the sanctification and salvation of all. He wishes all to be saved and abominates everything that will lead us away from Him. Hence, we should not only keep our souls free from sin, but should avoid everything that would lead us into sin. Of all sins there is none more abominable in itself and more ruinous in its consequences than the sin of impurity, mentioned by St. Paul in today's epistle.

I

When St. Paul warns the Thessalonians to abstain from fornication, he means they should avoid the passion of lust and keep themselves from all sins of impurity, in thought, word, and deed.

Purity leads to sanctity, impurity to destruction. Impurity defiles the body and pollutes the soul. It lowers man to the level of the brute. Yes, it makes

him lower than the brute; for to indulge the sensual appetite is to sin against rational nature, while the animal has no such guide.

Impurity blunts our moral feeling, undermines our physical strength, and ruins our soul. It was on account of this sin that God sent the Deluge to destroy the human race.

Some time after the Deluge the people of Sodom and Gomorrha became so wicked that God let fire and brimstone rain down from heaven upon the unfortunate cities, destroying them with all their inhabitants, except Lot's family, and turning the surrounding country into a vast sulphurous lake, which remains as a mark of divine wrath. The sin of impurity was the cause of this terrible visitation.

Thousands today are guilty of the same sins as those for which God destroyed the entire human race, except Noah's family, and for which the inhabitants of those wicked cities were punished. The sin of Onan, birth control, and other sins against God's law are punished in this world by premature death, disease, and insanity, and by eternal damnation in the next.

II

Some say that it is impossible to practice purity. If this were true, the teaching of Christ and His Church would be wrong. Christ said: "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God." The

sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," inculcates purity of thought, word, and deed, and is as binding as the commandments, "Thou shalt not kill," or "Thou shalt not steal."

The Catholic Church has always taught the necessity of chastity for her ministers and consecrated virgins. This chastity Our Divine Lord, St. Paul, and all the Saints loved. This chastity merited the special love of the Master for St. John. This chastity of body and purity of heart we must esteem and practice if we desire to be loved and rewarded by the Redeemer.

Purity is not an easy virtue to practice. Without God's help no virtue is easy, but with His help, which we can obtain by prayer, we can practice the the virtue of purity and every other virtue. The Saints were men and women like us. They had the same nature to hold in check, the same passions to conquer. They conquered their passions and subdued nature by purity in thought, word, and deed, and are now enjoying their reward.

If we wish to gain the victory over our passions, to conquer our corrupt nature, and to practice the virtue of purity, we must continually "Watch and pray."

Watch where and with whom you go, watch what you do and think. Do not go where purity is not loved and practiced. Avoid every person, place or

thing that would be to you an occasion of sin. Go with no one who might be a source of temptation. Watch your eyes, your tongue, your thoughts.

But above all things, do not forget to pray. Pray earnestly, pray without ceasing. Without earnest, sincere, continual prayer you cannot obtain the victory. Never neglect your night and morning prayers, your Sunday Mass, and the frequent reception of the Sacraments.

If you watch and pray earnestly and constantly, you will gain the victory and merit the reward of Him who said: "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God."

XX

THE THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

CHILDREN OF THE LIGHT

"Walk then as children of the light." (Eph. V, 9.)

St. Paul in many of his epistles exhorts the early Christians to be more in earnest in the work of sanctification and salvation. In today's epistle, taken from his Letter to the Ephesians, he warns them against unchastity and covetousness, and reminds them that they are called to holiness and should walk as children of the light in holiness, justice, and truth.

I

Children of the light walk in truth, in justice and in holiness by believing in God, hoping in Him, and loving Him above all things. As children of the light, then, we must believe with an undoubting faith in the unity and Trinity of God, in the Incarnation, in the death and Resurrection of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and that God will reward the good and punish the wicked for all eternity.

We must believe that there is but one God, the

Creator and Lord of all things, and that in this one God there are three Divine Persons, really distinct and of the same Divine Nature, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. We must believe in all the other truths the Catholic Church teaches because God has revealed them who can neither deceive nor be deceived.

Believing in these truths, and relying on God's goodness and promises, we firmly hope that God will pardon our sins, give us the grace to lead good lives, and finally lead us to our eternal home.

II

If we walk as children of the light, if we believe in God, hope in Him and love Him, we shall follow St. Paul's advice in today's epistle, when he says: "Be ye followers of God."

We are followers of God if we are humble, gentle, and kind. Christ, the model of Christian perfection, desires us to learn of Himself meekness and humility of heart.

On one of the highest points in the Andes Mountains, on the boundary line between the two great Catholic countries, Argentina and Chile, is an immense statue of Christ. It was placed there in 1904 as a memorial of lasting peace between the two countries. For some years there had been a dispute about the boundary line, which was at length peacefully settled. In thanksgiving for this victory

a statue of the Prince of Peace was set up in this conspicuous position. On the 13th of March, 1904, headed by the bishops and priests of the two republics, thousands of Chileans and Argentineans marched in procession from both sides up the rugged Andean heights and dedicated the statue as a lasting memorial to Him who alone can give peace to individuals and peoples. Looking up at this statue of Christ, with His left hand holding a cross and His right raised in benediction, the people of those progressive Catholic republics are reminded that Christ, the Prince of Peace, and He alone, can bring peace to troubled hearts and quarrelling nations.

Sinners, especially the unchaste and the avaricious, are children of darkness. Those who do good works are children of light. They love the light, they are not ashamed to appear before God or man, because they are sincere followers of Him who said: "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify my Father who is in Heaven."

As Christ, the Prince of Peace on the mountain top, elevates the minds and hearts of those southern people above the wrangling world to the contemplation of divine things, so Christ in your minds and hearts will keep your thoughts from wrangling, from wrath, from avarice, from evil desires, and

will make you God-loving, God-fearing, good, kind, charitable Christians—real "children of the light," for "the fruit of the light is in all goodness, and justice, and truth."

XXI

THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

TYPES AND PROPHECIES

"Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise." (Gal. IV, 28.)

WHAT God promised in the Old Law was fulfilled. What the prophets of the Lord foretold actually came to pass. No matter how great the obstacle to be overcome, no matter how much the opposition of wicked men, everything foretold happened just as God's prophets said it would.

I

In the Old Testament we find many types and symbols of personages and events of the New Testament. A type is a figure or representation of someone or something to come. The sacrifices of Abel, Isaac, and Melchisedec were types of the great Sacrifice of the New Law, which is offered on our altars "from the rising to the setting of the sun," and will be offered until the end of time.

We read in the book of Jonas that he was ordered by the Lord to go to Nineveh, a great and wicked

city, to preach to the wicked inhabitants and convert them. In his humility he feared the hard task, and fled to Joppe. There he entered a boat and took passage for Tharsis. A storm arose, and the sailors threw Jonas into the sea. A great fish swallowed him, and he was inside the fish for three days and three nights. After his release Jonas went to Nineveh and preached penance.

Jonas for three days and three nights inside the great fish is a type of the death, burial, and Ressurrection of Christ. St. Matthew, in the twelfth chapter of his Gospel, says: "As Jonas was in the whale's belly three days and three nights, so shall the Son of Man be in the earth three days and three nights."

Josue, the son of Nun, who led the children of Israel into the promised land, after years of wandering in the desert, is a type of Jesus, the son of Mary, who, after our wandering through the wilderness of this world, will lead us into the Promised Land, —our eternal home. The Old Testament has many such types prefiguring persons and events of the New Testament.

II

In the Old Testament, God's revelations appear principally as prophecies, while in the New Testament they appear as accomplished facts. All the prophecies of the Old Testament were fulfilled in the

New. Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is the center of these prophecies, for in Him they were fulfilled.

The casting out of the bondwoman with her son from his father's house represents the rejection of Jews because they rejected and persecuted Jesus Christ. The children of Jesus Christ, Christians, are the children of the "free woman," *i.e.*, the church. The Jews forfeited the blessing of God because they rejected His Son. Christians receive God's blessing because they are true lovers and followers of Jesus Christ, the foundation of both the Old and the New Testaments.

Perhaps the most pointed of the prophecies which center in the Saviour are those of Daniel and Micheas. In the ninth chapter of the Book of Daniel we read that "Christ the Prince" would come seventy weeks of years after the order was given to rebuild Jerusalem. This prophecy was fulfilled in the Founder of Christianity, Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The prophecy of Daniel predicts the time, while the prophet Micheas in the fifth chapter designates the place of birth of the Messias. "And thou Bethlehem Ephrata art a little one among the thousands of Juda: out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be the ruler of Israel."

These and other prophecies, made centuries before Christ, were fulfilled in Him, whose birth at

Bethlehem corresponded with the time prophesied by the Prophet Daniel.

The true Christian is a faithful follower of Him in whom were fulfilled the types and prophecies of the Old Testament. He is a loving child of the free woman, Christ's Church. He is a man of faith, a man of good works. He is one who practices what he believes.

Let us endeavor at all times to be good, obedient children of the Church and faithful followers of Jesus Christ, in whom were fulfilled the types and prophecies of the Old Testament.

XXII

PASSION SUNDAY

SACRIFICE

"Brethren, Christ being come, a high priest of the good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is not of this creation, neither by the blood of goats or of calves, but by His own Blood, entered once into the Holy of Holies, having obtained eternal redemption." (Hebrews IX, 11.)

THIS day's epistle was written to the Jews in Palestine, who spoke Hebrew, and who had been recently converted. Although Christians, they desired to keep some of the observances of the Old Law. The ceremonies of the Old Law, the majesty of the Temple, the solemn sacrifices, appealed strongly to these Jewish converts. The first persecutions of the Infant Church occurred here in Palestine. Many suffered martyrdom. Fearing that some would weaken and yield to threats and punishments, Paul, the zealous Apostle, wrote his Letter to the Hebrews, to enlighten and encourage these Jewish Christians and to prevent them from abandoning the new faith.

I

Sacrifice is the highest form of adoration. God gave us everything we have, and we should be willing to offer Him our time, our work, even our lives. From the beginning of the world sacrifice has been offered to God. Cain, Abel, Abraham, and Melchisedec offered sacrifices. Before the time of Christ, God's Chosen People met at various times in the Temple, to offer sacrifice. They killed a calf or a lamb and offered it to God to show that He had authority over every person and thing.

Under the Old Law the day of expiation was celebrated with great solemnity. The High Priest prepared for it during seven days. On the day itself the beasts to be offered were slain. The blood of oxen, goats, and calves was sprinkled in the Holy of Holies, and the victim offered to God.

These sacrifices were offered for the purpose of obtaining favors in return. While the earlier sacrifices of the Old Law were sacrifices of praise and honor, the later sacrifices were sacrifices of expiation.

All of the sacrifices of the Old Law were figures of the Great Sacrifice of the New Law. The High Priest of the New Law is Jesus Christ. The High Priest of the Old Law was the dispenser of earthly benefits; the Great High Priest of the New Law is the dispenser of heavenly blessings. The High Priest of the Old Testament went into the taber-

nacle with the blood of a slain beast; Christ, the High Priest of the New Testament, entered with His own Blood, which He gave for the world's salvation.

II

To offer sacrifice is the greatest thing we can do in religion. Nothing else gives God so much honor. Sacrifice may be offered to God alone. We can pray to the Blessed Virgin and to the Saints, but cannot offer sacrifice to them.

A sacrifice is an offering of a visible object by a priest to God and the consumption of it to acknowledge that God is the Creator, Lord, and supreme Master of all things. The Great Sacrifice of the New Law is the Mass, which is offered for all the purposes for which God instituted the various sacrifices of the Old Law. These objects are: to honor and glorify God; to thank Him for all His blessings; to satisfy His justice for the sins of men; to obtain graces and blessings.

Even if the Mass were not a sacrifice, the prayers of the Mass would still be the best and most perfect ever composed.

But the Mass *is* a sacrifice. During the Mass the body and blood of Christ are offered to His Heavenly Father at the consecration, and afterward consumed by the priest. In the Mass, then, there is the offering of a visible object by a priest to

God, and the consumption of the victim to acknowledge that He is the Creator and Lord of all things.

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the highest form of worship. During the Mass Jesus Christ, the King of Kings, comes down upon the Altar and is offered to His eternal Father. We firmly believe in Our Lord's presence on the Altar, and hence should participate in the Mass with feelings of the greatest respect, reverence, adoration, thanksgiving, faith, hope, and love.

The sacrifices of the Old Law, then, were figures of the great Sacrifice of the New Law. The sacrifices before the time of Christ were offered to God according to the Mosaic Law, to honor, praise, thank, and adore Him. In a similar way the Sacrifice of the Mass is offered to Almighty God, according to the command of the Saviour, to adore, thank, and praise the Great Giver of every best and perfect gift.

Let us be present at Mass with attention and devotion. Let us meditate during the holy Sacrifice on the Passion of Our Divine Saviour, which the Mass commemorates, and let us ask Him to lead us safely from our earthly home into the tabernacle of eternity.

XXIII

PALM SUNDAY
OR
GOOD FRIDAY

THE TRIUMPH OF THE CROSS

"He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross." (Philippians II, 5.)

THE Philippians, to whom St. Paul wrote the Letter from which today's epistle is taken, had some enemies, who caused quarrels, disputes, and divisions among them. St. Paul exhorted them to restore unity and charity among themselves. He proposed to them the example of Jesus Christ. "Brethren, let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." He told them that Christ humbled Himself by becoming man and dying on the Cross for man's salvation, and that on account of this, God exalted Him and gave Him a name above all names. He asked them to imitate Christ's humility and obedience, so that they might become partakers of His glory.

I

The life of Jesus Christ on earth was a succession of trials and triumphs. His last great trial, the

death on the Cross, was followed by His greatest triumph, His glorious Resurrection.

When the Founder of our Church appeared upon earth, the nations were expecting Him. The four hundred and ninety years of the prophecy of Daniel were completed. So certain were they that the time for the appearance of the Messias had arrived, that people went to the desert to ask John the Baptist if he were the Messias.

Not only were all the Messianic prophecies fulfilled in Christ, but His every act on earth proved His Divinity. "He went about doing good."

In Galilee, in Samaria, in Judea, wherever He went, He healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, and raised the dead to life.

His life formed such a contrast to that of the Pharisees that they contrived to find some accusation against Him. He was brought before the judge and condemned to die the ignominious death of a malefactor on the Cross. This terrible, humiliating death of the Cross, Christ endured to show us the evil of sin.

II

Christ's greatest trial, His death on the Cross, was followed by His greatest triumph, His glorious Resurrection. Christ was obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross, but rose from the dead glorified and immortal. His sacred body, torn and

wounded, bruised and battered, arose immortal, impassible, and endowed with the power to pass through space with the swiftness of thought.

Not only did He triumph in His glorious Body, but in His very Name. He was gloriously triumphant. The Name "Jesus" is a triumph of the Cross; it means Saviour; it means all that He gained for us by dying on the Cross.

The Name Jesus signifies the whole work of salvation. It is the Name which Our Lord and Saviour won by His humility, His suffering, and His obedience in dying on the Cross.

The Cross is our hope, our glory, our salvation. The triumph of the Cross is seen in the triumph of the Church in every land. The triumph of the Cross may be seen in the glorious triumphs of the Saints and martyrs, virgins and confessors of every age and clime since the great triumph of the Cross.

That we may join the glorious company of God's Saints, let us put into practice the lessons St. Paul teaches us in today's epistle and let us try to imitate the humility, the obedience, and the charity manifested by Jesus Christ in His triumph of the Cross.

XXIV

EASTER SUNDAY

PEACE

"Therefore, let us feast, not with the old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." (1 Cor. V, 8.)

After the gloom, the sorrow, and the desolation of Good Friday, come the brightness, the joy, and the glory of Easter Sunday. Persecution is followed by triumph, the crucifixion by the Resurrection, death by eternal life. The turmoil, the trial, and the bitterness of Our Lord's last days on earth were succeeded by victory, joy, and eternal peace.

I

Easter is a day of hope and peace. It is a day of hope. Since, as St. Paul says in today's epistle, "Christ our pasch is sacrificed" and risen from the dead, we have reason to hope for a glorious resurrection.

Christ came on earth for the redemption of all men. By becoming man, He elevated, ennobled, and

glorified human nature. For man's peace and happiness, He became the humblest of men, suffered, and died.

God, if He willed, could have avoided all this suffering. One drop of His Sacred Blood would have saved all mankind.

Although one drop of blood, one sigh, one tear of the Man-God would have been sufficient to save all mankind, He wished to endure trials, sufferings, and humiliations in order to inspire in us a more lively faith, a more ardent love, and a more lasting hope in Him, who by dying on the Cross showed that He was man, but by rising from the dead proved that He was God.

II

Jesus, rejected by His people, condemned to an ignominious death, led to the slaughter on Good Friday, appears on Easter Sunday as the victorious Master of life and death, the Lord of Heaven and earth, and the Prince of Peace.

Having redeemed us by His Passion and Death, He wished to give us an unanswerable proof of His Divinity by His resurrection from the dead.

We rejoice today because "Christ our pasch is sacrificed" and is risen from the dead to teach us that we must arise from sin and give up its occasions forever. We must "purge out the old leaven," that is, shun bad companions and give up

sinful habits. We must avoid every person, place or thing that would lead us into sin. As sin is the source of all the trouble, evil and dissension in the world, as we know from experience that sin causes quarrels, fights and disturbances between neighbors, friends and families, if we give up sin and "purge out the old leaven," we shall experience in ourselves an inexpressible joy, satisfaction, and peace.

Sin, which is a turning away from God, causes the wars and disagreements among nations. Giving up sin and returning to God will bring peace to a weary world.

Christ, the Prince of Peace, and He alone, can solve the problems agitating the minds of men, and restore order, prosperity, unity, charity, and peace.

When St. Paul in today's epistle asks us to feast, "not with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth," he desires us to turn from sin to grace, from anxiety and trouble to rest and peace.

By His suffering, death, and Resurrection, Christ conquered sin and death and hell. He crossed the weary wilderness of life and, through the dark valley of death, entered the Promised Land.

Follow your Saviour, the Prince of Peace, to this Promised Land, by imitating His example, and your minds will be at rest, for you will find eternal peace.

XXV

LOW SUNDAY—FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

THE VICTORY—OUR FAITH

"This is the victory which overcometh the world, our faith." (1 John V, 4.)

LAST Sunday we celebrated the feast of Easter, which is a feast of triumph, joy, and victory. To-day's epistle speaks also of victory: "This is the victory which overcometh the world, our faith." Christ the victor over sin and death and hell is also the Author of our faith.

I

Christ is the Conqueror of the world. His victory over the world was complete. The world at the time of His appearance was subject to the Roman Empire. Some of the nations of that era were barbarous, some partly civilized, but all were in a deplorable moral condition. Even in the most civilized among them, Greece and Rome, the majority of men were slaves, while woman was treated as an inferior. The most abominable crimes and vices

abounded; in fact crimes and vices were honored as gods.

At the instigation of the Emperor, fathers would slay their sons, husbands deliver their wives and daughters to the vile passions of the mob, masters feed their slaves to the lions.

To remedy these evils and to conquer the world of sin and vice, Christ came, taught, founded a Church, chose disciples and Apostles, and commanded them to continue His work. Having been cruelly put to death, Christ arose from the dead. This was his great victory over the world.

II

After the Resurrection Christ remained forty days with His disciples to show that He was truly victorious over the world and to give them further instructions. Then He ascended from Mount Olivet into Heaven. From that moment His Church existed in the Apostles. Theirs was the faith that was to overcome the world.

Ten days after the Ascension the Holy Ghost came down upon the Apostles while they were assembled in prayer at Jerusalem; after which they separated to preach the Gospel and prepare the triumph of the faith in the conversion of the nations.

With the conversions began the persecutions. It was during the first general persecution, under the

cruel Emperor Nero, that St. Paul was beheaded and St. Peter, the first Pope, was crucified head downward.

Peter was succeeded by Linus; Linus by Cletus; Cletus by Clement; and so we can trace the illustrious line of Pontiffs, heirs of the Apostolic authority, from Peter to the present Pope, Pius XI.

For the first three hundred years after Christ's great victory there were ten general persecutions. Thousands, perhaps millions of martyrs, were cruelly murdered and sent to Heaven for their faith in Christ. During that time all the energies of that powerful empire that had conquered the nations of the world were directed against the Church of God. Nevertheless, Christianity grew and expanded, while the mighty colossus of the Roman Empire crumbled into dust.

Christianity triumphed over all its enemies, for Christ is with His Church. The former enemies of our faith are no more. The Church still flourishes and will continue to flourish until the end of time.

"For this is the victory, that overcometh the world, our faith."

XXVI

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

"You are now converted to the shepherd and bishop of your souls." (1 Peter II, 25.)

Of the 72 books of the Bible 27 belong to the New Testament. The most important of these are the Gospels of St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke, and St. John. They narrate the principal events of Our Lord's life and record His teachings. During the course of the ecclesiastical year the important portions of these Gospels are read and explained at the Sunday Masses.

After the Gospels, the book called Acts of the Apostles holds first place because it contains the history of the Christian Church for the first 30 years after the Ascension of Our Lord into Heaven. It was written by St. Luke. St. John wrote the last book of the Bible,—known as Apocalypse or Book of Revelation. It contains various prophecies which have not yet been fulfilled.

The other 21 books of the New Testament are letters or epistles of various Apostles. Of these

Epistles St. Paul wrote 14, St. John 3, St. Peter 2, St. James and Jude one each. Of St. Paul's 14 Epistles, two were written to the Corinthians, 2 to the Thessalonians, 2 to Timothy and one each to Titus, Philemon, the Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Hebrews.

I

Besides the Gospel a portion of one of the Epistles is read at Mass every Sunday. This is most frequently taken from St. Paul's Epistles because he wrote so many. The epistle or lesson read in today's Mass, however, is from the First Epistle of St. Peter, second chapter, 21st to 25th verse.

St. Peter wrote this epistle from Rome, which in a figurative sense, he calls Babylon, about the year 48, to certain Jewish converts in Cappadocia, Galatia, and various parts of Western Asia. He had preached the Gospel in different places of Asia Minor, and this letter was written to encourage the converts he had made, to inspire in them a spirit of sacrifice and service, and to strengthen them in the virtues of faith, hope, and charity. He reminds them that Christ suffered for all, and that all should follow in His footsteps. Living among pagans and Jews, they were constantly subjected to persecution and must bear all patiently for the love of Christ.

II

This epistle has a salutary lesson for each one of us. As the people to whom he wrote were constantly subjected to humiliations, insults, and persecutions, on account of their religion, so we in this country, and Catholics everywhere, are misunderstood, misrepresented, calumniated, insulted, and persecuted on account of our religion, in accordance with the words of the Saviour, "The world will hate and persecute you."

St. Peter reminds us that, as Christ suffered for us and left us an example of patience, so we, too, should suffer patiently for His sake and follow in His steps. This does not mean, however, that we are to allow lies and misrepresentations to go unchallenged. We should defend the truth, uphold the right, obey the commandments, and imitate the Saviour by penance and good works.

St. Peter closes today's epistle with the words: "For you were as sheep going astray, but you are now converted to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." Like those converts of Asia Minor, we too were as sheep going astray, but now are converted to the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, for we are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

No animal needs the shepherd so much as the sheep. Sheep wandering from the flock starve or are devoured by wild beasts. They need the

care, the guidance, the attention of the Shepherd.

Of all the figures used by Our Lord when speaking of Himself there is none that is more endearing, none more apt to excite our love, than that of the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd loves, guides, guards, protects, and feeds his sheep. He dwells amongst them, takes care of them, and, if necessary, dies for them.

So Our Divine Lord, the Good Shepherd of our souls, dwells amongst us on our altars to soothe our cares and answer our prayers. He takes care of us, feeds us with His Body and Blood, and even gives His life for us.

His representative, the Pope, the Great White Shepherd of Christendom, the bishop, the shepherd of the diocesan flock; and the priest, the pastor or shepherd of the parochial sheep, dwell with their charges, feed them with wholesome spiritual food, look after the wandering sheep, bring them back to the fold, and, if necessary, give their lives for their sheep.

Let us follow the advice of St. Peter and bear patiently the trials, the sufferings, and the persecutions inflicted by our enemies. Let us walk in the steps of the Good Shepherd, for we are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

XXVII

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

THE DUTIES OF A CHRISTIAN

"I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims to refrain yourselves from carnal desires." (1 Peter II, 11.)

THE epistle for the third Sunday after Easter is taken from St. Peter's Letter to the new converts of Western Asia, whom he reminds of their duties to God, their neighbors, and themselves.

I

According to St. Peter, the first duty of the Christian is to avoid sin. "I beseech you," he says, "to refrain from carnal desires, which war against the soul." He includes all kinds of sin under the term "carnal desires." From this we see the great truth that the end of all sins and crimes is the satisfaction of the carnal nature of man, the gratification of his senses.

Avarice, envy, dishonesty, quarrelling, murder, gluttony, drunkenness and all vices proceed from the concupiscence of the flesh, from the desire to satisfy our sensual nature.

These carnal desires, the Apostle tells us, "war against the soul." They are at the service of Satan, whereas the soul is God's. The warfare of the carnal desires against the soul is a battle of Satan against God. The fight is hard and long. That is why we say that the life of man on earth is a continual warfare. Woe to the one who grows weary in the conflict and allows the carnal desires to gain the victory over him!

The drunkard who allows his carnal desire of drunkenness to overpower the soul, the voluptuary who delights to roll in vice, the miser who spends days and nights brooding over his treasure, the dishonest man who takes unjust advantage of his neighbor, and the wrathful man whose angry word or unkind deed vitally injures a friend,—all these are a result of the victory of carnal desires in their warfare against the soul.

The Apostle warns us in today's epistle against yielding to these desires. "Let your conversation," he says, "be honest among the gentiles; that whereas they speak against you as evil doers, they may see your good works and glorify God."

II

It is not only our duty to keep our passions under control, to refrain from carnal desires, and to avoid sin, but we must lead a good life. This we do if we faithfully perform our duty to God and our

neighbor. The duty to our neighbor is included in the words of today's epistle: "Honor all men; love the brotherhood." Love of our neighbor, then, is the great commandment for the new converts, as it is for us. This commandment is so important that it is second only to the highest commandment of all, that obliging us to love God.

To love our neighbor is not difficult for one who really loves God. And why should we not love God? We naturally love those who love us and bestow favors upon us. Who could love us as God loves each and every one of us? Who could confer such favors on us as God has conferred? He created us and gave us all that we have and are. Why, then, should we not love Him? And since God made all men, we are all children of God and brothers in Jesus Christ, and should love one another as brothers.

The duties of a Christian, then, according to St. Peter in today's epistle are to avoid sin and to love God and our neighbor. This is summed up in the words. "Refrain yourselves from carnal desires, which war against the soul. Honor all men; fear God; love the brotherhood."

The only happiness in this life is to do your duty, to love God and keep His commandments.

XXVIII

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

CONSCIENCE

"Every best gift and every perfect gift is from above." (St. James I, 17.)

St. James, the author of this Sunday's epistle, was Bishop of Jerusalem and suffered martyrdom for his faith. He wrote the epistle to Jewish converts who were scattered around various portions of Western Asia and exposed to many trials, sufferings, and persecutions. Fearing that these early Christian converts would yield to these trials and persecutions, and fall away from the faith, St. James wrote them an Epistle to console and strengthen them. From this Epistle the Church has taken today's lesson.

I

St. James says that it is God alone from whom all good gifts come, and that faith alone is not sufficient for salvation. God gave us all that we have and all that we are. He gave us the world we dwell in, with its wonderful productiveness, its beauty and variety of scenery. He gave us the sun, the moon,

the stars, the various heavenly bodies that revolve in their orbits with perfect harmony and order. He gave us our bodies with their wonderful faculties, our minds with their noble perfections, and our souls with their God-like qualities of spirituality and immortality.

Whatever is good, whatever is perfect, whatever is useful, God made for us. He made the grand old ocean with its mountain-high waves, and its white-winged fleets. He made the earth with its variety of scenery, with its snowcapped mountains, its green-carpeted hills and blooming valleys. He made man with his remarkable gifts of mind and body.

One of the greatest and most precious of God's gifts to man is conscience.

II

Conscience, rightly instructed, is the voice of God telling us what to do as right, what to avoid as wrong. The voice of conscience is the guide of our moral conduct. He who follows his conscience, properly instructed, acts in accordance with the will of God.

Indifference to the voice of conscience leads to ruin. Lucifer, shining brightly in the vestibule of the heavenly Jerusalem; Adam, peacefully dwelling midst Eden's bowers; the embezzler and the courtezan who fell little by little; and the drunkard who

said he could "take it or leave it alone," all fell because they were indifferent to the voice of conscience warning them of danger.

Fidelity to conscience leads to God. All the Saints in Heaven are saved because they were obedient to the dictates of their conscience, because they had the courage of their convictions and were faithful in doing God's Will at all times.

Let us be thankful to Almighty God for all the gifts He has bestowed upon us. The best way to show our gratitude is to lead good lives, to do God's Will, and always to be faithful to the dictates of conscience.

XXIX

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

FAITH AND GOOD WORKS

"Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only." (St. James I, 22.)

TODAY'S epistle teaches us the important truth that faith without works is of no avail, that we must not only believe what God teaches, but do what He commands, if we wish to save our immortal souls. For St. James tells us: "Faith without works is dead" (St. James II, 26).

I

We must believe with an undoubting faith in the Unity and Trinity of God, in the Incarnation and death of Our Lord Jesus Christ, in future rewards and punishments, and in all the other truths which the Catholic Church teaches.

We must believe that there is one God, the Creator and Lord of Heaven and earth; that in this one God there are three Divine Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, really distinct and of the

same Divine nature; that Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, became man and suffered and died for our salvation; and that God will reward the good and punish the wicked for all eternity.

These truths, and all the other truths which the Catholic Church teaches, must be believed by us, because they have been revealed by God, who can neither deceive nor be deceived. The act of faith which we recite every day when we say our evening prayers, contains in a few words all we must believe in order to be saved.

II

But faith alone will not save us, for "faith without works is dead." We must also keep the Commandments. "If thou wilt enter into life," Jesus Christ tells us, "keep the Commandments." (Matt. XIX, 17.)

The good works necessary for salvation then are those contained in the Ten Commandments. These Commandments of God are our rule of life, for they show us our duty to God, to our neighbor, and to ourselves.

All human laws must conform to the Ten Commandments of God. If they do not, they are unjust and not binding, because according to the Acts, "We ought to obey God rather than man."

The Ten Commandments may be reduced to two: love of God and of the neighbor. If we truly love God, and our neighbor for the love of God, we shall not transgress any of God's Commandments. If we love God with a true genuine love, we shall not offend Him by preferring anyone or anything to Him, by taking His holy Name in vain, or by refusing to give Him the honor, love, and adoration due Him, especially on the days set apart and dedicated in a special manner to His service.

If we love our neighbor for the love of God, we will say nothing and do nothing to injure another in his person, his property, or his character.

A true lover finds nothing too difficult if it will please the one he loves. He who loves God above all things finds no sacrifice too great if it will please God.

There is only one way for us to please God, that is to keep every one of His Commandments. Millions of God's Saints suffered imprisonment, banishment, and martyrdom rather than offend Him by breaking His law.

Let us imitate their example. Let us not only believe all that God teaches, but do all that He commands us to do.

For "faith without works is dead." We must be "doers of the word, and not hearers only."

XXX

FEAST OF THE ASCENSION

CHRIST'S ASCENSION INTO HEAVEN

"And when He had said these things, while they looked on, He was raised up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight." (Acts I, 9.)

THESE words from the Acts of the Apostles tell us briefly the reason for today's celebration. After describing the events of Our Saviour's forty days' sojourn among the Apostles after His Resurrection, St. Luke gives this terse description of His triumphant ascension into Heaven.

I

While the Apostles and disciples were still gazing up to where they had last seen the ascending form of the Saviour, two angels in white garments said to them: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to heaven? This Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come, as you have seen Him going into heaven." (Acts I, 11.)

Then the Apostles returned to Jerusalem and remained in prayer ten days, until the coming of the Holy Ghost.

Christ's Ascension reminds us that Heaven is our true home. We have no abiding place here on earth. We are here merely to prepare for our true home. Hence all our thoughts, desires and aspirations should be directed toward Heaven.

We should not waste our time on earthly things that quickly perish but should occupy ourselves with the lasting things of Heaven. The things of the earth,—wealth, honors, pleasures,—can not make us happy. Happiness consists in doing our duty and working for our heavenly home.

II

Nothing in this world can satisfy man's craving for happiness. Wealth, honors, and pleasures can not make him happy, consequently there must be some place beyond this world where man's craving for happiness will be satisfied, and where he will enjoy that peace, rest, and contentment for which he continually craves.

In Heaven all man's desires for happiness will be satisfied. In Heaven he will be able to gratify his every want and need.

Man is happy for a while when viewing the beauties of earth. But this earth with all its beauties is only God's footstool, and if it is so beautiful, how must His eternal dwelling place be?

Man feels happy when in the company of good people; Heaven is peopled with all the good men and

women who ever lived. But what constitutes the great happiness of Heaven for the saints and angels, the good spirits ministering before His throne, is the Beatific Vision, the everlasting presence of God. The presence of God is happiness, is life eternal. The absence of God spells misery, death eternal.

Let us resolve to center our thoughts on heavenly things. Let us not give too much time and attention to the world, its treasures and pleasures. Let us live so that the perishable things may be an aid to attain things eternal, that when our time comes to leave this world we may, like Christ Jesus, gloriously ascend into Heaven, our true home.

XXXI

SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF ASCENSION

PRUDENCE

"Dearly beloved, be prudent, and watch in prayers." (1 Peter IV, 7.)

In today's epistle, St. Peter emphasizes the necessity of prudence in all things. Be prudent in your dealings with God, with your neighbor, and with yourselves. Be prudent in your actions, be watchful in prayer, be kind and charitable to others. Be careful in your speech and do all for the honor and glory of God.

I

Prudence is one of the four cardinal virtues. The others are justice, temperance, and fortitude. "Cardinal" is derived from *cardo,* a hinge. These four virtues are the principal virtues on which the other moral virtues turn, as a door up on its hinges.

Every moral virtue needs to be well judged; this is prudence. It needs to serve the common good; this is justice. It needs to be restrained; this is temperance. It must have firmness and courage;

this is fortitude. Justice gives everyone his due, temperance restrains one's desires; fortitude makes one strong, while prudence chooses between good and evil.

Prudence is from *providentia,* which means foresight. It may be defined as right reason applied to practice, or the ability to see what is and what is not virtuous, and how to attain the one and avoid the other. Prudence directs all other virtues. Without prudence fortitude becomes foolhardiness and recklessness, justice becomes weakness, and temperance becomes fanaticism.

The prudent person is careful in determining his line of conduct.

II

"Be prudent and watch in prayers," the epistle tells us. From these words of St. Peter we learn that prudence, watchfulness, and prayer are the means necessary for attaining Christian perfection.

Prudence guides us in finding the way and using the right means to attain the end; watchfulness foresees the obstacles to our salvation, and prayer brings grace from above to assist us in overcoming these obstacles.

Our Divine Lord commended the virtue of prudence in many places and in emphatic words. A notable example is the parable of the prudent and the foolish virgins (Matt. XXV, 1–13). The pru-

dent virgins had taken oil with them that they might meet the Bridegroom with burning lamps, whereas the foolish virgins had forgotten or neglected to go thus prepared. The Bridegroom in this parable is Our Divine Lord. The oil was the number of good works the prudent virgins had accumulated. Knowing that faith without good works is of no avail, they sought, found, and made good use of the means that would be of assistance when the time came for them to stand before the Judgment Seat. Fully aware of the uselessness of the riches, honors, and pleasures of this world, the prudent virgins supplied themselves with the oil of good works, and thus prepared, went to meet the Bridgegroom at the marriage feast of eternal life. The foolish virgins, on the other hand, were unprepared to meet the Bridegroom and as a result could not partake of the eternal banquet.

Another example of prudence commended by Our Lord is that of the unjust steward (St. Luke, XVI, 1–9). You know the story. The steward was accused of wasting his master's goods. When about to lose his position, he saw a number of men who owed his master and reduced the amounts they owed. This, of course, was a dishonest proceeding, but in adopting it the steward made friends of those debtors. Our Lord, in commending his prudence, —or rather shrewdness,—far from approving of his dishonesty, advised us to imitate his making friends

with "the mammon of iniquity." We can do this by using money to help the works of the church, the school, the poor and needy, and thus laying up treasures in Heaven.

We must not only be prudent, but also watchful if we wish to lead a Christian life. Watch your thoughts, your words, and your acts. Watch where you go, watch with whom you go. Thousands and thousands of sins are committed because one is surprised, is taken unaware. Therefore, always be on your guard!

Besides prudence and watchfulness we need prayer. Prayer makes prudence fruitful and rewards watchfulness. It is a confession of our faith in God, of our hope in God, and of our love of God.

Let us then be prudent and watchful and pray often. Let us be careful in our speech and do all for the honor and glory of God.

XXXII

PENTECOST

THE COMING OF THE HOLY GHOST

"When the days of the Pentecost were accomplished, they were all together in one place." (Acts II, 1.)

THE Acts of the Apostle, from which today's epistle is taken, describe the coming of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles, ten days after Christ's Ascension. The Acts say that a sound from Heaven, like a mighty wind, filled the house, and parted tongues as of fire sat on them, and "they were filled with the Holy Ghost."

I

The sound resembling a mighty wind, which accompanied the coming of the Holy Ghost is a sign of the great power the Holy Ghost was to wield over the Apostles. Before His coming the Apostles were timid, weak, and easily frightened; but after His descent they were brave, strong, and ready to undergo everything, even death itself, for their Master.

The tongues of fire seem to mean the eloquence

and power shown by the Apostles in the establishment of the Church of God. The Apostles were poor, unlearned men. After Pentecost, however, the knowledge they possessed, the wisdom they manifested, and the courage they displayed in working for the spread of Christ's kingdom on earth, were truly wonderful.

The strangers gathered in Jerusalem from every nation in the world wondered at hearing the Apostles preach the truths of our holy religion in the various languages spoken by the people of the different countries. "And they were all amazed and wondered saying: 'Behold are not all these that speak Galileans; and how we have everyone heard in our own tongue?' "

II

The Apostles gathered in the upper chamber in Jerusalem when the Holy Ghost descended upon them were the beginning of Christ's Church on earth. Pentecost is the birthday of the Church.

Peter, the first Pope, began to rule God's Church on that first Pentecost Sunday, and his successor rules the Church today, and will continue to do so until the end of time. As a result of Peter's first sermon, three thousand people were converted. Today the preaching of Peter's successors and their representatives in every land is converting countless thousands every year to the faith of Christ.

In Baptism and Confirmation the Holy Ghost takes possession of the Christian. That same Holy Spirit that worked such wonders in Peter and the other Apostles, dwells in the soul of every confirmed Christian. That same Being is working wonders of sanctity and charity in countless Christians to-day. He enlightens their minds, strengthens their wills, and gives them courage to fight the battle of life with vigor and perseverance.

The Holy Ghost also confers His sevenfold gifts upon us—wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and the fear of the Lord.

Thank God that the great Church, which was born on the first Pentecost Sunday, nineteen hundred years ago, is still vivified, guided, and protected by the same Holy Spirit. For Christ promised that He will teach His Church all truth and abide with Her forever.

XXXIII

TRINITY SUNDAY

LOVE OF GOD, NEIGHBOR, AND COUNTRY

"Dearly Beloved, God is charity." (1 John IV, 8.)

St. John lived to a greater age than any of the other Apostles. Long after all of them had passed away and received a martyr's crown, John was living in exile on the island of Patmos, whither he had been banished by the Emperor Domitian. It was during his exile there that he wrote the Apocalypse and his epistles. His First Epistle, from which today's lesson is taken, was written in the last year of the first century, about 66 years after Our Lord's Ascension into Heaven.

I

This epistle breathes the same sweet spirit of charity that is found in St. John's Gospel. He impresses upon us the necessity of believing in God, in the Incarnation, and in the mystery of the Holy Trinity which we commemorate today, and of keeping the Commandments.

This is the charity of God that we keep his com-

mandments. "He who loveth God," he says, "loveth his brother."

Why should we love God? We should love God, first, because "God is Charity," because He is so worthy of our love. In the second place, we should love God, as St. John tells us in this Epistle, "because God hath first loved us."

God showed His great love for us in many ways. He showed it by creating us in preference to so many millions of possible beings whom He might have created and who would have given Him a greater love, a more perfect devotion, a higher service than we render Him. He showed it by coming down from Heaven and becoming man for our salvation. He showed it by sending the Holy Ghost to guide and protect the Church which He founded to point out to us the way to Heaven.

Yes, God is Charity, God is love, and "he that abideth in charity, abideth in God and God in him."

No parent could love his child with as deep an affection, with as great a love, as God has for each one of us. If God so loves us, why should we not love God? If we love God, we will love our neighbor.

II

Love of our neighbor for God's sake includes all of our duty to God and to our fellow man. It includes the duty of parents to children, of chil-

dren to parents, and of everyone to his neighbor and his country. Parents should look upon their children as sacred charges entrusted to their care by Almighty God, and should love, maintain, and train them properly by word and example. The love of children for their parents knows no dispensation or diminution. They should love them always for the love of God and obey them as holding the place of God in their regard. From the real Christian homes where God is loved, honored, and adored, where parents and children live together in love and harmony, proceed true and noble young men and women, who will be good citizens, as they are good Christians, loving their country for the love of God.

Religion and patriotism, love of God and love of country, go hand in hand and are closely united. Love of God comes first, love of country comes next. He loves his country best and keeps her laws most faithfully who does so for God's sake. A citizen cannot love God and hate his country. This is the reason why good Catholics are always good citizens. The true American not only loves his country for God's sake, but because he loves America, he loves liberty and desires to see its blessings enjoyed by all nations.

Endeavor to love God above all things and show that you love Him by loving your country, your

neighbor, your family, and your friends. May the sweet spirit of charity breathed by this day's epistle penetrate your minds and hearts, so that your lives may be modeled after the life of St. John, as his was patterned after the Divine Model.

XXXIV

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

LOVE IS LIFE

"We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren." (1 John III, 14.)

In today's epistle St. John tells us that love is life, and consequently hatred, the opposite of love, must be death. For he says we passed from death to life because of love.

I

The life of the soul is sanctifying grace, by which the soul is united with the Holy Ghost. Sin breaks this bond and kills the soul. Love of God and man restores it to life.

St. John says that Christians should not wonder if the world hates them. The world hated Christ. It hates everything and everyone not conformable to its standard. The Pharisees hated Christ because His life of humility, honesty, and purity formed such a contrast to their lives of pride, deceit, and hypocrisy.

Christians are disliked by the worldly minded

who do not wish to practice virtue. Dishonest men dislike honest men; liars dislike those who speak the truth; and the impure hate the pure and good. This is the reason the Catholic Church is hated.

The devil hates God; darkness shuns the light; malice dislikes goodness; vice despises virtue; and the world hates the Christian who endeavors to do his duty.

If sin is the death of the soul, hatred, which is one of the greatest of sins, is in an especial manner death eternal, whereas, on the contrary, the opposite of hatred, love, is life. If hatred is death, love is life.

II

Perhaps one of the best examples of this truth is to be found in the murder of Abel by his brother, Cain. Cain, the first murderer, is a powerful example of sin, malice, envy, hatred, and death. Abel, on the contrary, is a model of virtue, innocence, justice, love, and life. Because God favored the sacrifice of Abel envy, hatred, murder, death entered the heart of Cain. Envy caused dissatisfaction, dislike, hatred, and death.

Envy, revenge, and hatred have been the cause of the disputes, murders, and wars that have ravaged the world since the time of Cain, and time and again threatened it with moral as well as physical destruction.

Thousands dislike their neighbor, allow this dislike to grow into envy or hatred, and if they do not check this feeling, it will end in murder. For hatred is death, and love is life.

Our love must be accompanied by kind words and charitable deeds. Ask the God of love to impress deeply upon your minds and hearts the closing words of this day's epistle: "My little children, let us not love in word nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth." For love is life.

XXXV

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

HUMILITY AND SOBRIETY

"Dearly Beloved, be you humbled under the mighty hand of God. . . . Be sober and watch." (1 Peter V, 6.)

Of all the virtues necessary for the formation of a Christian character, none are of more importance than the two referred to by St. Peter in today's epistle,—humility and sobriety.

Honesty, truthfulness, kindness, purity, patience, all virtues in fact, are built on humility as a foundation, and are guarded, guided, protected, and restrained by sobriety.

I

Humility is the foundation of all virtue, just as pride, its opposite, is the source of most vices and sins. Pride exists in us from the beginning, being the immediate consequence of original sin. It grows with our growth, increases with our strength, and if not checked, will gain such a mastery over us that it will be difficult,—almost impossible,—to eradicate it.

By practicing humility we gain strength to overcome pride and all other vices and sins.

"Be you humbled, therefore, under the mighty hand of God; that He may exalt you in the time of visitation; casting all your solicitude upon Him; for He hath care of you."

According to these words of St. Peter, humility and confidence in God are necessary for a Christian life. They are the foundation of all other virtues. Why should we not be humble? When we reflect on God's greatness and our own littleness, God's supreme worth, sanctity, power, goodness, and our own worthlessness, weakness, evil inclinations, and nothingness, we must realize that in the sight of God we are nothing and that it is necessary to cast all our solicitude upon Him. A notable example of humility is found in the parable of the publican, who, in his humility, would not so much as raise his eyes towards Heaven, but standing afar off, said: "O God, be merciful to me a sinner."

With humility and confidence in God we will serve Him loyally, render Him our homage of faith, hope, and love, and give a good example to our neighbors by doing everything for the honor and glory of God.

II

The second virtue mentioned by St. Peter in today's epistle is sobriety. In the conflict with the

enemy of our salvation, next to humility, nothing is more important than sobriety. "Be sober and watch; because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour; whom resist ye, strong in faith."

By sobriety we mean moderation in all things, especially in eating and drinking. If sobriety is the mother of watchfulness and vigilance, gluttony, intemperance in eating and drinking, is the mother of sloth. Health, wisdom, chastity, holiness, are the results of sobriety. Sobriety assists us in watchfulness and prayer, and makes us friends of God, of the angels, and of the Saints.

We should not only be sober, temperate in restraining our evil inclinations, but we should also be watchful lest our enemy, the devil, attack us when unprepared, and gain the victory over us.

Vigilance is necessary for us at all times. It is just as necessary for us on the voyage of life as it is for the pilot at sea.

Well do I remember that beautiful February morning in 1901 (February is a beautiful month in Southern climes), when we steamed slowly through the Strait of Messina. I had risen early that I might have the satisfaction of seeing three active volcanoes within twelve hours—Vesuvius, Stromboli, and Etna. As we left Naples about nine o'clock the night before, Old Vesuvius was belching forth great quantities of fire, smoke, and

lava. It was an inspiring spectacle. The following morning, about five o'clock, while gazing alternately at Stromboli fast disappearing in the North, and Etna just looming into prominence in the South, my attention was attracted to a commotion on the vessel caused by a series of short jerks, turnings, and twistings. The thought occurred that we must be in the whirlpool of Charybdis and in danger of being dashed against the rock of Scilla. Upon inquiry I found such to be the case. Scilla on the Italian coast was pointed out. In ancient times many a vessel was dashed against this deadly rock and all on board were swallowed up by the awful deep. No wonder Grecian mythology looked upon Scilla and Charybdis as two monsters, eager to take their victims from every vessel passing through the Strait of Messina. Nothwithstanding modern perfection in maritime matters, the watchful care of a skilful pilot is needed to keep the vessel from dashing against the deadly rocks.

In the voyage of life are many shoals, rocks, and Scillas. The Charybdis of our appetites and evil passions is ever impelling us toward the Scilla of destruction. We need a vigilant guide, a watchful pilot, to prevent our frail bark from being shipwrecked. This guide, this pilot, is a strong Christian character, built on the conscientious practice of humility and sobriety.

XXXVI

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE CHRISTIAN SOLDIER

"Brethren, I reckon that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared to the glory to come." (Romans VIII, 18.)

SINCE Adam's fall a heavy burden lies upon all mankind. Suffering, sin, and sorrow,—trials, troubles, and temptations fall to the lot of all men. This burden would be unbearable did not the Christian know that there will come a time when he will be set free, will share in the fruits of the Redemption and obtain a crown of glory, compared with which all the sufferings of this world sink into insignificance.

As the soldier suffers untold hardships for his country's welfare and for worldly glory, so the soldier of Christ endures pain, sorrow, and suffering for his soul's welfare and for the honor and glory of God.

I

From the Christian soldier ready to suffer for

God and country we can learn many lessons. The most important of these lessons are love for order and respect for authority.

Order, so necessary for the soldier, is Christianity's bulwark and Heaven's first law. "Did sun and moon run lawless through the sky, planets and comets from their orbits fly," there would be no more confusion among the heavenly bodies than there would be among soldiers or Christians who lack order and discipline.

The church, the country, the army, the family, all depend upon order and discipline. Suppose each man did what he wished, without consulting the welfare of others, confusion would reign and failure would result. Success as a Christian, a citizen, or a soldier depends upon intelligent, industrious, and well-directed order.

From the Christian soldier, then, who is willing to suffer much for God and country, we learn the beauty, the utility, and the necessity of having a definite plan and of doing everything in an orderly manner.

II

Respect for authority is another lesson taught us by the Christian soldier. The Christian soldier and the good citizen recognize that all legitimate authority comes from God. "There is no authority but from God," says St. Paul. Hence, obedience to

authority is a Christian duty that binds all citizens and all soldiers.

True obedience does not stop to argue about commands, nor does it hesitate to refrain from what is forbidden. It is prompt, it is generous, it is ready to do or die. It unhesitatingly fulfills whatever is commanded, as did Meagher at Fredericksburg.

In private and family life the willing obedience of the citizen to lawful authority, and of the child to parental authority, is as beautiful, as important, and as necessary as the obedience of the soldier to those over him in authority.

Next to order and obedience to authority there is nothing more necessary for the Christian soldier or citizen than love of truth and manly courage.

Be true to yourselves, true to your principles, true to your God, true to your country and you will be true Christians and true patriots. Do not forget that the highest form of courage consists in the submission of mind and body to the laws of right and justice.

In submitting our minds and feelings to law, order, and authority, in always being true, manly, and courageous, we shall be obliged to undergo much suffering and many trials, but we should suffer in patience, remembering that the "sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared to the glory to come."

XXXVII

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

LOVE OF ENEMIES AND CONFORMITY WITH CHRIST

"Not rendering evil for evil." (1 Peter III, 10.)

THE perfect Christian, adorned with all those virtues that make the true follower of Christ, is pictured for us by St. Peter in today's epistle. He enumerates nine virtues that should adorn the life of the true Christian. These are: unity or concord, compassion, charity, mercy, modesty, humility, love of our enemies, endurance of sufferings, and conformity with Christ.

I

The first virtue that should adorn a Christian's life, according to St. Peter, is unity or concord. Unity is the bond keeping together the faithful and strengthening them against their enemies. The foundation of unity is God. In the Holy Trinity is found unity of essence. The nearer created beings are to God, the greater the unity between them. What a perfect concord, what an intimate unity exists among the millions of angels and the myriads

of stars! What disunion, on the contrary, exists among the fallen angels! Among true Christians as among all God's creatures unity should exist.

Love of our enemies is, perhaps, the most important as it is the most difficult to practice, of the nine virtues mentioned by St. Peter. It really comprises within itself several of the other virtues, as compassion, charity, and mercy. If we love our enemies, we shall necessarily love our neighbors who are not our enemies; we shall love one another like brothers. "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you love one another" (John XIII, 35). We owe it to our God and to our religion to harbor this brotherly love, so that it may be said of us, as it was said of the early Christians: "See how those Christians love one another."

Our charity and acts of mercy should extend to all men. We should be ready at all times to perform spiritual and corporal works of mercy, to instruct the ignorant, to counsel the doubtful, and to help the needy. To love God and their fellow man for God's sake, many young men and young women willingly give up the riches and pleasures of the world and devote their lives to the performance of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy as a missionary in some foreign land, or as a priest or Sister in our own country.

Compassion, suffering with those who suffer,

sympathy for those in trouble, is closely related to charity. In fact, love of enemy, compassion, and mercy are daughters of charity.

It is not difficult to love our friends, who love us, but it is the part of the true Christian to love our enemies. We should not render evil for evil, but, on the contrary, good for evil. The noblest revenge an injured person can take is to pray for his enemies.

The Christian should follow the example of the Master and pray with Him: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

II

Conformity with Christ will insure humility, modesty, and endurance of sufferings. St. Peter exhorts us to conformity with Christ by the words, "Sanctify the Lord Christ in your hearts." Without the strength which we receive from the grace of God, without the help of our Lord Jesus Christ, we could not practice charity, humility, forgiveness, love of our enemies, and the other virtues necessary for a true Christian life.

The practice of all virtues would be useless, however, without interior justice and holiness, without conformity with our Divine Redeemer. If our likeness to our Saviour is exterior only, is made up of outward trials, sufferings, and persecutions, it lacks the vital force to make it worthy of eternal life.

To be like Our Saviour, to be really conformed with Christ, we must know Him and love Him and serve Him with all our heart. "Sanctify the Lord Christ in your hearts."

It should be our constant endeavor to lead the life of the perfect Christian, adorned with all those virtues enumerated by St. Peter as necessary to the true following of the meek and lowly Nazarene.

The true follower of Christ loves life temporal and eternal, and he uses the temporal to assist him in attaining eternal life. He refrains his tongue from evil and watches over his lips that they speak no guile. Innocence of tongue, uprightness of heart, and purity of life are characteristics of the true Christian, whose motto is: "Decline from evil and do good." Avoid sin and practice virtue.

XXXVIII

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE GATE TO GOD'S KINGDOM

"Brethren, all we who are baptized in Christ Jesus, are baptized in His death." (Romans VI, 3.)

On account of the sin of our first parents, all of their descendants, Mary alone excepted, are born in the state of original sin. As sin kills the soul, so Baptism, through which we receive sanctifying grace, restores the soul to life.

Baptism is the most necessary of the Sacraments because without it we cannot enter the kingdom of God. It is the gate to God's kingdom.

I

Christ clearly taught the necessity of Baptism. He tells us: "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." When He sent His Apostles to convert the world, He charged them to "baptize all nations in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

He not only teaches, but He insists on the neces-

sity of Baptism when He says: "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be condemned."

What Christ taught, the Church has always practiced. We read in the Acts that the five thousand persons converted by St. Peter on the first Pentecost were baptized by him.

St. Paul, after his miraculous conversion on the road to Damascus, spent three days fasting and praying; but this was not sufficient. It was necessary for him to go to Ananias to be baptized. "Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sin."

Wherever St. Paul, St. Peter, and the other Apostles went, they instructed the people and baptized whole households, adults as well as children. Baptism has always been the ceremony of admission to the Church,—as it were, the gate to God's kingdom.

II

Since Baptism is so necessary, anyone who has the use of reason can baptize when it is impossible to get a priest. All he has to do is take water, pour it on the head of the person to be baptized, and say while pouring the water: "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

When Baptism is conferred solemnly in church, it is accompanied by many beautiful ceremonies,

designed to remind us of the grace bestowed on us by this Sacrament.

The first ceremony is that of the exorcism, when the priest breathes upon the child, as Christ breathed upon the Apostles when they received the Holy Ghost.

The Sign of the Cross is made on the head and breast of the child that he may know and love the Crucified Saviour forever. Salt placed on the infant's lips is a sign of wisdom and prudence. The priest also touches the ears and nostrils with saliva, as Christ touched the eyes of the blind man and the ears of the deaf man.

After this the sponsor answers for the child that he renounces the devil, and all his works, and all his pomps, and then the child is anointed on the breast and shoulders with holy oil, that he may bear the crosses and trials of life.

The water is then poured on the child's head, accompanied by the words: "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." At this moment sin leaves the soul, God's grace enters, and the soul stands stainless before its Maker.

Of the ceremonies that follow, anointing with holy chrism means consecration to God's service; the white garment placed on the child's head signifies the robe of innocence and purity; and the lighted candle put in his hand is to remind him of the light

of faith that should always burn in the heart of the Christian.

The memory of our Baptism should encourage us to ask God for grace to keep our pledge to renounce the devil, with all his works and all his pomps; to avoid and resist temptation; and to endeavor to the best of our ability to keep pure our baptismal robe of innocence.

XXXIX

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

LIFE EVERLASTING

"But the grace of God, life everlasting, in Christ Jesus, Our Lord." (Romans VI, 23.)

According to St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans, "the wages of sin is death; but the grace of God, life everlasting." (Romans, VI, 23.) He no doubt means that no sooner does the sinner enjoy the pleasures which are the wages of sin, than they quickly vanish. Other pleasures may follow, but they, too, soon pass away. For they are the wages of sin, and the wages of sin is death.

I

To remain in sin means to be separated from virtue and from God. The sinner yields his members to serve iniquity; his members become servants of Satan, in fact, he gives his body and soul, his whole life, to the service of the world, the flesh and the devil. By remaining in the path of evil, he descends lower and lower in wrongdoing. The person who falls into the sin of drunkenness, or anger, or impurity, if not converted, will day by day

and year by year, fall deeper into the mire of sin, vice, and crime.

The sinner is Satan's slave as long as he remains in sin. He has turned his back on God to serve God's arch-enemy. To be saved, he must turn his back on Satan, and "yield his members to serve justice unto sanctification."

II

To live and die in sin is death eternal, to live and die in grace is life everlasting. For, "being made free from sin, you are become servants to God." Life everlasting includes all life, human, angelic, and divine,—life in its fullest, completest and holiest sense,—life with the angels, the saints, and God. Life everlasting includes every pleasure, every joy, every delight. It includes everything that can make one happy. It is the full fruition of the Beatific Vision, the enjoyment of God forever.

The more we reflect on our immortal soul, the more impressed do we become with our great responsibility. For, says St. Paul (Gal. VI, 8), "What a man soweth, that also shall he reap. For he who soweth in the flesh, of the flesh shall reap corruption; but he who soweth in the spirit, of the Spirit shall reap everlasting life."

During the reign of Henry VIII, Sir Thomas More, the Chancellor of England, was imprisoned because he refused to act against his conscience by

taking the oath acknowledging the Royal Supremacy. His wife visited him in prison and begged him to do as the wicked king desired, and come home to his wife and children. Sir Thomas replied: "How long do you think I might live to enjoy this home of ours?" "Oh, twenty years, perhaps," his wife answered. "My dear wife," Sir Thomas said, "he would be a very poor calculator who for twenty, or even a hundred years, would risk the loss of eternity."

The lesson impressed upon us by this incident is that the longest life here on earth is nothing when compared with life everlasting. Let us always keep in view life everlasting,—our last end, and we shall never sin.

We desire a life of endless bliss. St. Paul in today's epistle tells us how to obtain this end. We must avoid sin, for "the wages of sin is death," and we must practice virtue, for "the grace of God is life everlasting in Christ Jesus Our Lord."

The duty of avoiding sin and practicing virtue is strengthened by our benevolence to poor suffering humanity, is encouraged by our desire to lead others to God, and is built upon the strong foundation of faith in God and in Him whom He sent, Jesus Christ.

"For the grace of God is life everlasting in Christ Jesus Our Lord."

XL

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

SALVATION

"If by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh you shall live." (Romans VIII, 13.)

St. Paul in today's epistle, taken from the eighteenth chapter of his Letter to the Romans, impresses upon us the necessity of mortification if we wish to save our immortal souls. There is no other way to eternal salvation than that marked out for us by the teaching and example of St. Paul and the Master. The way of trials, of sufferings, and of sorrows, patiently borne, is the only way that leads to God.

I

There is only one thing necessary for us in this world, and that is to save our souls. It is not necessary for us to be rich. It is not necessary for us to be great. It is not even necessary for us to enjoy good health. But it is necessary for each and every one of us to save his soul. If a man loses his soul, all is lost, and Heaven, our being's end and aim, can not be attained.

God placed us here not to acquire honors, riches, or pleasures, but to work out eternal happiness by good works. He made us that we might learn to know, love, and serve Him here, and to enjoy Him hereafter.

Such is the grandeur of our destiny,—the enjoyment of God for all eternity. Such is the end for which man is placed in this world.

In comparison with this important end of our creation, all the honors, riches, and pleasures of this world sink into insignificance.

II

God placed Adam in the garden of Eden for a certain end. This end was eternal happiness if he obeyed the Divine command. But Adam disobeyed God and, as a punishment, was doomed to sickness and death, and to transmit sin, suffering, and death to his posterity.

God received us into His Church for a certain end. He gave us the seven fountains of grace, the Sacraments, to assist us in attaining this end. But, like Adam, have we not time and again forgotten our glorious destiny, turned our backs upon God, broken His commandments, and forfeited our claim to eternal salvation?

An eternity of happiness or of woe awaits us. If God were to ask us, as He did Adam, "Where art thou?" would we, like Adam, have to hide our

faces in shame? Or could we stand our ground and say, "Here I am, O Lord. I have been true to the trust confided to me. I have done my duty."

Of what benefit was it to Solomon that he was the wisest and the richest man of ancient times? In an evil moment he sinned grievously and, had he not repented, he would have been eternally lost.

What good does it do our great railroad men, oil men, steel men, and others to be millionaires? For if they gained their riches unjustly, or, if by making a god of money, they have no place in their thoughts for eternal salvation, and for that God who alone is to be loved, served, and adored.

Since the salvation of our souls is the end of our existence, we should be willing to sacrifice everything, even life itself, rather than offend God grievously and lose eternal happiness. That we may be eternally happy, we should endure trials, sufferings, and sorrows patiently. We should labor earnestly to save our souls, to frequent the Sacraments, to keep the Commandments, and we should do nothing that would be detrimental to our soul's salvation.

XLI

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

DISLOYALTY AND CONFIDENCE

"Brethren, let us not covet evil things." (1 Cor. X, 6.)

WITH a few clear and simple words, St. Paul, in the tenth chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians, warns us against rashness, temerity, and disloyalty, while he encourages us to have confidence in God. He calls our attention to the Jews wandering in the wilderness and asks us to learn a valuable lesson from their mistakes.

I

When the Chosen People were fleeing from the servitude of the Egyptians, they were miraculously aided in crossing the Red Sea. In fact during, their long sojourn of forty years in the wilderness, God frequently came to their aid. Had it not been for His special intervention, they would have miserably perished soon after entering the desolate region east of the Red Sea.

God guided them by a pillar of cloud in the daytime and a pillar of fire at night. He fed them

by miraculously sending them Manna every day from Heaven, and provided water and whatever else was necessary for their comfort.

Notwithstanding this care and protection, notwithstanding the countless gifts and blessings bestowed upon them, thoughtless and frivolous Jews time and again fell away from God, and in their rashness, temerity, and disloyalty became guilty of idolatry, luxury, sensuality, and an inordinate desire for pleasure.

For their rashness, disloyalty, and countless sins God punished them in many ways. Perhaps, the greatest punishment they had to endure was that they were not permitted to enter the Promised Land. Of all those who left Egypt, only two, Joshua and Caleb, were permitted to reach the desired goal.

II

St. Paul tells us in today's epistle that the evils which befell the children of Israel during their sojourn in the wilderness were figures for our correction.

God has been good to us, as He was to the Jews in the wilderness. He has showered numberless blessings upon us. He not only created us, but regenerated us by the waters of Baptism. As He led the Chosen People out of captivity of Egypt, so He delivered us from the captivity of Satan.

He feeds us spiritually by a Heavenly Manna,—the Holy Eucharist. He gives us grace to overcome temptation. But notwithstanding all God's gifts and blessings, our salvation is not certain, unless we do our part, unless we correspond with grace. To make our salvation certain, we must have confidence in God, and labor and fight against our spiritual enemies.

Although God gave His people in the wilderness everything necessary for their comfort, they fell away from Him, and in their disloyalty, became guilty of the great sins of gluttony, idolatry, and impurity. St. Paul says that these things "were written for our correction." As a punishment for the sins of gluttony, God visited them with a great plague. Thousands were put to death on account of their idolatry, their worship of the golden calf; while, as the Apostle tells us, "there fell in one day three and twenty thousand" for sins of impurity.

Now, if these things "were written for our correction," what must we do to avoid the punishment inflicted by Almighty God upon His Chosen People? To avoid their punishment, we must avoid their sins.

God has been as good to us as He was to them. And yet we sometimes are disloyal to Him and turn our backs upon Him by committing sin.

Have we been guilty of gluttony by eating or drinking too much, or of thinking too much of what

we eat or drink? Have we been guilty of idolatry, of worshipping the golden calf, by thinking more of the things of the world than of Almighty God, by thinking too much of the money and the things of this world, by thinking too much of ourselves, spending too much time in beautifying ourselves? Have we been guilty of impurity in thought, word, or act?

If we have imitated the children of Israel in their disloyalty, let us avoid their punishment by repentance, by returning to God and placing all our confidence in Him.

Confidence in God and prayer for His grace will obtain for us the strength to overcome temptation, to avoid sin, and finally to enter the Promised Land,—our Heavenly Home.

XLII

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

IDOLS

"Brethren, you know that, when you were heathen, you went to dumb idols, according as you were led." (1 Cor. XII, 2.)

In the Apostolic age many converts received special gifts and graces after Baptism and Confirmation. The gift of tongues, the power of working miracles, and other extraordinary gifts were conferred by God in so far as He deemed it necessary for the growth of the Church. Some of those who did not receive such special gifts were jealous. St. Paul wrote this Letter to the Corinthians to warn them of their lack of charity and of the danger of returning to the spirit of idolatry. "When you were heathen, you went to dumb idols."

I

After the fall of our First Parents the human race rapidly became corrupt, so bad in fact that God determined to destroy them by means of a flood. Only Noë and his family escaped.

Some of the descendants of Noë remained faith-

ful to God, while others were led astray and followed false gods. When they were estranged from the one true God, the grandest things that could occupy their minds were nature and the works of nature. Many became worshippers of nature. They imagined that all things were an emanation from, or a part of, the Deity (Pantheism), or thought there was a double principle—a principle of good and a principle of evil, both eternal, and each antagonistic to the other (Dualism). Pantheism and Dualism were the prevailing religious beliefs, the former of Eastern, the lātter of Western Asia.

The Greeks worshipped various idols: Zeus, the god of heaven, and Gaia, the goddess of earth, the sun, fire, heroes, and demons. The philosophers did much to change their religious belief, but did not improve it very much.

The case was even worse among the Romans. They worshipped everything. They paid divine honors to Jupiter, Mars, Venus, and other planets. They worshipped the sun, the stars, virtues and vices.

All the ancient peoples, the Jews excepted, were idolaters. Few were the objects of nature, few the virtues, few the vices that were not deified. Even the demons were worshipped as gods.

The chief of the infernal regions, Pluto, was said to be a brother of Jupiter, the principal of the gods.

Another of the infernal gods was Plutus, the god of riches. The objects of worship among the Greeks and Romans amounted to 30,000.

The Apostles waged a relentless war against this idolatry. "You turned to God from idols," St. Paul says to the Thessalonians, "to serve the true and living God."

II

Because Catholics have crucifixes, statues, and images of the Saints in their churches, they are sometimes accused of idolatry. Perhaps those who make the accusation do not know what idolatry means. Idolatry is giving to a creature that honor which belongs to God. If we gave to crucifixes, relics, or images of the Saints the honor belonging to God, we should be idolaters. But we do not do so. We serve the true and living God and adore Him alone. The honor we give to those sacred objects is a relative honor. We honor them on account of the relation they bear to God and to his friends, the Saints.

Every Catholic knows the difference between pagan idolatry and the Catholic veneration of images. The pagans worshipped their idols as gods having power to help them. Hence they were idolaters. We Catholics know that statues and images have no intelligence to understand, no power to help us. Hence we do not adore them.

We have images and pictures of Our Lord, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the Saints, for the same reason that we have portraits of Washington, Lincoln, or our friends. We have them, not to adore them, but to remind us of those whom they represent.

Catholics adore God and honor the Saints.

By the aid of religious statues and pictures our devotion is increased, and we are stimulated to imitate the virtues of the Saints. Let us imitate them here, so that we may be with them hereafter. Let us not turn our back on God by making an idol of money, or pleasure, or anything in the world, and thus merit the rebuke of St. Paul directed against the Corinthians: "Brethren, you know when you were heathen, you went to dumb idols, according as you were led."

XLIII

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

HUMILITY

"For I am the least of the apostles." (1 Cor. XV, 10.)

ACCORDING to St. Paul, in the fifteenth chapter of his First Epistle to the Corinthians, we must not only receive Christ's Gospel in a believing heart, but we must live in accordance with its teachings and practice the Christian virtues in order to be saved.

None of the virtues taught by the Master and by his faithful disciple, St. Paul, is of more importance than humility.

I

St. Paul, as you know, before his conversion was a bitter persecutor of Christ and the Church. At the first persecution of the Christians by the Jews, when St. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, was stoned to death, Paul, or Saul, as he was then called, was present as a willing witness of that cruel scene. It was on his way to Damascus to persecute the Christians that he was miraculously converted.

His conversion was thorough and complete. The

thought of how he had treated Christ and His followers before the grace of God opened his mind to the truth, was ever before him and strengthened him in the practice of all virtues, especially the fundamental virtue of humility.

Notice the beautiful expression of humility in today's epistle: "For I am the least of the Apostles, who am not worthy to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God."

Through the wonderful working of grace, Saul the persecutor became Paul the upbuilder of God's Church. A great sinner became one of the greatest of Saints. Of all the virtues that illumine the life and character of St. Paul there is none that shines more resplendently than humility.

II

In his humility St. Paul never forget the grievous sins he had committed before his conversion, and ascribed all his good works to Divine grace. "By the grace of God I am what I am." Let us imitate him and not boast of our good works, but remember our evil deeds and ask God to grant us a meek and humble heart.

What a beautiful example of humility St. Paul's life offers to all of us! None of the Apostles, none of the martyrs, none of all the missionaries of God's Church did so much for God and humanity as St. Paul. But he never boasted of his wonderful work,

of his great triumphs for Christianity. In his humility he ascribed them all to God. "By the grace of God I am what I am."

The wrong he did before his conversion, the great sin of persecuting Christianity in its infancy, was ever before his mind after he became a Christian, causing him to weep bitter tears of compunction, encouraging him to redouble his efforts to build up the Kingdom of God on earth, and inspiring him with zeal, charity, faith, contrition, and humility.

Let us learn humility from St. Paul, who was such a faithful follower of the meek and humble Master. In reviewing our past lives we, no doubt, can find many motives for being humble. As St. Paul's sins committed before his conversion ever after reminded him of his duty to God and of the necessity of humbling himself, so our past sins should constantly remind us of our duty to God and of the necessity of true humility, the foundation of all virtue.

XLIV

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

RESPECT DUE TO GOD'S MINISTERS

"For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more the ministration of justice aboundeth in glory." (2 Cor. III, 9.)

Our Divine Lord came to sanctify and save all men. The work of civilizing, Christianizing, and sanctifying the human race, begun by Him, was entrusted to the Apostles, whom He called, ordained, and commissioned to continue the great work. On the Apostles and their successors, the bishops and priests of the Catholic Church, Christ conferred the greatest powers ever granted to man:—the power to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the power to forgive sins, and the authority to preach the Gospel.

I

Through the merits of Jesus Christ the Catholic Church possesses a priesthood, a sacrifice, and seven Sacraments. The priest offers to Almighty God the Unbloody Sacrifice of the Mass, preaches the Gospel to all the world, and administers the Sacraments.

The priest is the minister of Jesus Christ, who chose him that he might aid in the work for which the Saviour came on earth. What a noble mission! What a great dignity! To aid Jesus Christ in saving souls, to teach them the truths of salvation, to offer the Eucharistic sacrifice for them, to absolve them from their sins, to minister to them, to pray for them, and to fill them with heavenly blessings,—these are the works entrusted to the priest by the Redeemer of mankind. For this high mission did Jesus Christ choose the priest.

The farewell words of the Saviour to the Apostles, which we find in the twenty-eighth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, were: "All power is given me in Heaven and on earth. Going, therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world." The Apostles understood that it was by living teachers that the work of salvation was to be carried on to the end of the world. Hence we find St. Paul and other Apostles and disciples teaching and ordaining others as they themselves had been instructed and ordained.

As Christ was sent by the Father, and the Apostles and disciples by Christ, so the priest, the successor of the Apostles and disciples, is invested

with the same power and sent "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, and for the edification of the body of Christ." He is the minister of God commissioned to do God's work with His authority.

II

On the banks of Lake Genesareth Jesus Christ chose His Apostles and made Peter His vicar. As Peter could not be omnipresent, he and the other Apostles imposed hands on others, as the needs of the growing church demanded. The bishops ordained by the Apostles consecrated other bishops, ordained other priests, down through the ages.

St. Paul, for example, consecrated Titus bishop of Crete, with the express intention that he should ordain other bishops and priests in order that thus the sacred ministry might be perpetuated. What St. Paul did in Crete, St. Peter did in Antioch and Rome, and every Catholic priest can trace his authority to preach, to consecrate, and to administer the means of grace through the bishop who ordained him to Jesus Christ.

The duties of the priest are important, his responsibilities great. Christ said to the Apostles and their successors, the bishops and priests: "As the Father sent me, so also I send you." "He that heareth you, heareth me." "Do this in commemoration of me." "Whose sins you shall forgive, they

are forgiven." These words tell not only the great dignity, but also the important duties and responsibilities of the priesthood.

In the affairs of eternity the priest is all-important. He stands at the altar of God and has entrusted to him the Body and Blood of Christ, which he offers for the people. He is empowered to say to the penitent: "Thy sins are forgiven thee."

When you start on the voyage of life, he blesses your union, and with the various other Sacraments he follows you from the cradle to the grave.

Honor to whom honor is due. Who deserves greater honor or respect than the true priest of God, whose duties are so important, and whose responsibilities so great? If we admire the patriot who endures much for his country, if we respect the father and mother who labor and suffer for their children, what must be our feelings of honor and respect for the priest who sacrifices so much for the good of mankind? If the ministration of the Old Law be glory, "much more the ministration of justice aboundeth in glory."

XLV

FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION

MARY'S ASSUMPTION INTO HEAVEN

"I was exalted like a cedar in Libanus and as a cypress tree on Mount Sion." (Ecclesiasticus XXIV, 17.)

ACCORDING to a pious belief, The Blessed Virgin was taken up to heaven, body and soul. The feast in honor of this tradition has been celebrated on the 15th day of August from the early ages of the Church. This belief of the Catholics of practically all times and places is in harmony with Catholic piety!

I

While the Assumption is not a defined doctrine of the Church, it would be rash, impious, and dangerous to deny it. The Introit of today's Mass expresses the belief of the faithful and asks us to rejoice on account of the great honor conferred on Mary. "Let us all rejoice in the Lord, celebrating this festival in honor of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, on whose Assumption into heaven the angels rejoice and give praise to the Son of God. My heart

hath uttered a good word; I speak my works to the King."

How fitting it was that God the Son should confer this additional honor upon her whom He has so signally honored by making her His Mother!

After the death of her Divine Son, Mary lived for some time with St. John, the beloved disciple, in Ephesus. It is generally believed that she did not die for about fifteen years after the Saviour's Ascension into Heaven.

Some think she lived in Jerusalem a short time before her happy death. The tomb where the faithful Christians lovingly placed her body, is still to be seen in the Holy City. Her body remained in the tomb but a short time, a day perhaps, before it was taken with her pure soul to her heavenly home.

II

On the feast of the Assumption we commemorate the happy death and glorious Assumption of Mary, body and soul, into Heaven.

Let us ask ourselves why God the Son so honored Mary as to make her His Mother, live with her for thirty years in Nazareth, and afterwards take her body and soul to Heaven.

There can be no doubt that God selected Mary for the high honors He conferred upon her on account of her great virtues. In Mary you will find every virtue shining in a higher degree than in any

other human being. She was charitable, she was kind, she was humble, she was pure, she was meek, she was patient.

No matter what virtue you wish to practice, you will find it more perfectly exemplified in Mary than in any other creature.

Do you wish to practice humility? Her Divine Son excepted, none humbler ever trod the earth. Would you seek an example of purity? She was the purest of creatures, the Immaculate Mother of the Immaculate Son of God.

In the ages that are gone, Mary has been, and in the centuries to come she will be the great exemplar of Christian womanhood. Mothers can find no better model to follow and to propose to their children for imitation than Mary, the purest of God's creatures, the model of all virtues.

Imitation of the virtues of Mary is the best proof of our devotion to her and a pledge of our future union with her and her Divine Son in Heaven.

XLVI

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

FAITH IN CHRIST

"That the promise by the faith of Jesus Christ might be given." (Gal. III, 22.)

St. Paul tells us without faith it is impossible to please God. Without faith in Christ it is impossible to be saved. This is true since the coming of Christ, and it has been true from the beginning of the world. Before the coming of Christ the people were saved by believing in the Redeemer to come and keeping the Commandments, while since His coming they are saved by believing that the Messias has come and by keeping the Commandments.

I

The early converts from Judaism to Christianity thought they were still bound by the Mosaic Law and customs. St. Paul in today's epistle, taken from the third chapter of his Letter to the Galatians, corrects this error and teaches clearly that salvation depends upon faith in Christ.

In this epistle the Apostle makes a clear distinction between the promise and the law: "To Abraham were the promises made and to his seed." He tells us that by his "Seed is meant Christ," in whom as a descendant of Abraham was fulfilled the promise that all the people of the earth would be blessed. Faith in the coming Messias is the bond uniting the patriarchs of old with the Christians of today.

On account of this faith, Abel's sacrifice was preferred to that of Cain; Enoch was translated from earth to Heaven without the sting of death, and Noë prepared the Ark that saved the only living creatures which survived the Deluge. What was it except faith in the Redeemer to come that sustained Abraham in his trials, in offering his son Isaac as a sacrifice to God? This faith, too, animated Isaac when he blessed Jacob and Esau, and Jacob when he blessed the sons of Joseph. By this faith Moses led the children of Israel out of captivity; and by this faith they were guided in their wanderings through the wilderness and led into the Promised Land.

Thus we see that the life of the people of the Old Law from the very beginning, from Abel down through the Patriarchs and Prophets to John the Baptist, was a life of faith in God's promises, a life of faith in Christ.

II

The Old Testament is a type or figure of the New. What was prefigured in the Old was fulfilled in the New Testament. In today's epistle St. Paul speaks of the covenant of the promise to Abraham and to his seed, which is Christ; of the covenant of the law which was given to Moses on Mt. Sinai; and of the ordaining of the law through the mediation of the angels and of Moses. These three factors in man's salvation are types that correspond to promises fulfilled in the New Testament and in the Church.

The promise given by God to Abraham was fulfilled in Christ. As faith in the coming Redeemer led Abraham and the descendants of Abraham to salvation, so faith in Christ, the Redeemer who has come, leads us to salvation, if our faith is strong, and we follow His teachings as well as make use of the means of grace.

The covenant of the law corresponds to the moral teaching of the Gospel. The ordinance of the Old Law prepared men for receiving salvation, and the moral teachings of the New Law prepare men for Heaven by applying to them the merits of Jesus Christ.

In place of the angels and Moses provided in the Old Law as a means of salvation, we have in the New Law, God's representatives,—the Pope, bishops,

and priests of the Church to teach, govern, and guide us.

Thus we see that Christian morality is founded on belief in Christ, keeping the Commandments, and making use of the means of grace provided by the Church. Faith alone without good works is not sufficient. As the promise to Abraham was not sufficient to save the children of Israel without keeping the Commandments, so faith in Christ is not sufficient for our salvation if we do not keep His Commandments. "Not every one who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven." The Will of God is that we keep His Commandments.

As faith alone without good works is not sufficient for salvation, neither is it sufficient to say, as some do, that it does not matter whether a man believes or not, if he but leads a blameless life. A man can not lead a blameless life unless he fashions it after the life and teachings of Christ. Neither can they be saved who will not receive the faith through the divinely appointed teachers in the Church.

The Saints spent themselves in works of faith and charity. Those who live lives of faith and charity are always humble. We have all known persons among the poor and unlearned as well as

among the rich and learned who were noted for their deep humility, built on faith and charity.

When Charles Carroll of Carrollton was on his deathbed, he said: "I have lived to my ninety-second year. I have enjoyed a long life, great wealth, and high positions. But what I now look back to with most satisfaction is that I have always been faithful to the practice of my religion,—that I have always believed in God and kept the Commandments."

Always, my dear friends, believe in God and in Him whom He sent, Jesus Christ, and live in accordance with your faith; then you may hope to spend eternity with Him.

XLVII

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE HOLY SPIRIT—CONFIRMATION

"Brethren, walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." (Gal. V, 16.)

THE Apostles and disciples received the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Before that time they were weak, timid, and vacillating. After the Holy Spirit descended upon them they became strong, firm, and courageous. Filled with charity and zeal, they went out into the world to extend Christ's Kingdom. They preached, worked, suffered, and died to lead men to Christ.

I

As the Holy Spirit strengthened the Apostles on that Pentecost Sunday nineteen hundred years ago, so when we receive Confirmation the Holy Spirit descends upon us, to make us strong and perfect Christians and soldiers of Jesus Christ. Baptism makes us Christians, Confirmation strengthens us in the faith, makes us strong Christians.

The Acts of the Apostles tell us about the administration of Confirmation by the Apostles. In the nineteenth chapter we read that St. Paul was preaching at Ephesus and after instructing a number of the Ephesians and baptizing them, laid hands upon them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost. "When Paul had imposed his hands on them, the Holy Ghost came upon them and they spoke with tongues and prophesied."

The eighth chapter of the Acts gives an account of the conferring of Confirmation on some recent converts in Samaria. Peter and John were sent to Samaria, "who when they came prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost." Then they laid hands upon them and they received the Holy Ghost."

These two texts, taken from the Acts of the Apostles, clearly show us that the Apostles administered Confirmation after Baptism, just as our Catholic bishops do today. For the bishop, like the Apostles, extends his hands over those to be confirmed, prays that they may receive the Holy Ghost, and anoints the forehead of each with Holy Chrism in the form of a cross.

II

Although by Baptism a person becomes a child of God and an heir of Heaven, he needs the wisdom,

strength, and courage which the Sacrament of Confirmation bestows.

The gifts of the Holy Ghost which the Apostles received on Pentecost, are received by the Christian at Confirmation. They are: wisdom, understanding, counsel, knowledge, fortitude, piety, and fear of the Lord.

As Confirmation makes a Christian a soldier of Jesus Christ, he needs these gifts in fighting the battle of the Lord. He needs especially fortitude or courage.

Courage is the special virtue of the soldier. The enemies of the Church are continually waging war against her, and the Christian soldier needs courage to battle for right and truth. He also needs strength and courage to be able to withstand the privations, hardships, sufferings, and insults that the true soldier of the Cross is frequently called upon to undergo.

Christians who have been confirmed are not only heirs of Heaven but should be active in spreading the faith and fearless in upholding it. Besides the seven gifts bestowed on the Christian when he is confirmed, the Holy Ghost also produces in him love of God, joy in heavenly things, peace, patience, goodness, mildness, modesty, and purity.

The Apostles were filled with these gifts and fruits as were the early Christians. They bore

trials, sufferings and death for Christ with patience, love, and joy. They were heroes of the faith. This courage, strength, and patience of the early Christians always characterizes the true follower of Christ in trials and persecutions.

When we received Confirmation, these gifts and fruits were conferred upon us. Let us thank God for His many blessings and ask Him for the grace, strength, and courage to overcome our spiritual enemies.

XLVIII

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

WALK IN THE SPIRIT

"If we live in the Spirit, let us walk in the Spirit." (Gal. V, 25.)

In the center of Asia Minor was a large territory, settled by the Gauls three centuries before Christ, called Galatia. The Galatians were among the early converts of St. Paul. Some time after he had preached the Gospel to them, false teachers came among them, spreading pernicious and calumnious doctrines, just as false teachers are doing today. To refute these false, pernicious, and calumnious teachings St. Paul wrote his Epistle to the Galatians.

I

Today's lesson, taken from the fifth and sixth chapters of this Epistle, is applicable not only to the Galatians, but likewise to the people of the present time. Trouble, strife, and discord had arisen among the Galatians on account of false teachings being disseminated among them. This trouble was causing disunion and threatening not only the faith

which St. Paul had preached to them, but also their morals.

St. Paul in the first place exhorts these early Christians and us not to seek after vain-glory. He means to say: Do not think too much of yourself, do not seek praise and recognition from men. That is vain, empty, meaningless honor. It is like a bubble that contains nothing to refresh or satisfy man's body or mind. True praise, real recognition is that which comes from God. It belongs to those who seek God above all things, who seek first the honor and glory of God.

Neither, according to St. Paul, should we desire our own honor. If we perform our good works out of vain-glory and hypocrisy, or for any other dishonorable motive, we are not acting in a manner pleasing to Almighty God. "God forbid," says St. Paul," that I should glory, save in the Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ."

Nor should we provoke or envy one another. Among the Galatians was much strife, much hatred, much envy. Some of the converts thought themselves better than the other Christians. St. Paul, rebuking them, said: "Let us not be made desirous of vain-glory, provoking one another, envying one another." We should instruct one another in a spirit of meekness, considering that we are all human and subject to temptation. We should, in imitation of St. Paul and the Master, assist one another in bear-

ing our burdens. We should sympathize with, advise, direct, and instruct our fellow men.

II

Directing and instructing others was the great duty of the Apostle, St. Paul, as it is of the bishops, priests, and teachers of the Church today. What better work could a young man or a young woman engage in, than the work of the Master, the work of instructing others as a priest or as a school-teacher? This instruction should be Christian and should be begun at home. Home instruction is the foundation upon which the future training of the child is laid. The work of the teacher is the work of the Master who said: "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." The increase of crime in our country is the result of lack of proper instruction.

As many evils threatened the Galatians in St. Paul's time, so many evils threaten our country today. Never in the history of America has the difficulty of moral, social, and political questions been more keenly felt than at the present time. Society is trembling. Its foundations are being undermined. On the one hand the terrors of bigotry, Socialism, and anarchy threaten its destruction; while on the other the grinding, deathly grasp of monopoly, hypocrisy, and autocracy seems destined

to crush it into fragments. The only hope we have of dealing with these as with all other evils lies in the teachings of St. Paul, and in the eternal principles of the Catholic Church. If her teachings are followed, society will be saved. She teaches with St. Paul that we must "work good to all men" and "render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's and to God the things that are God's." In other words we must give everyone his due and reserve all the affections of the heart for God. If everyone did this, there would be no strife, no quarrels, no war. If people would heed the teachings of St. Paul and the Church, they would be men of faith; men of honesty, men obedient to the laws of God and country, men of conscience.

Our country needs such men to counteract the immorality of the day.

Conscience, rightly instructed, is the Voice of God, telling us what to do and what to avoid. A man of conscience is a man of character. A man of character will do his duty even though the heavens should fall. The great work of our Catholic schools is *to train the conscience* of the pupil.

Every Catholic who loves his God and his country will see to it that his children attend a Catholic school whenever it is at all possible. Those who are properly instructed, those who follow the teachings of St. Paul in today's epistle to the Galatians, will be persons of conscience and of character. They

will be kind, merciful, and charitable. They will aid the poor, visit the sick, be merciful to the afflicted, and charitable to all. This is a practical application of St. Paul's words: "And in doing good let us not fail; for in due time we shall reap, not failing." This is living in the spirit of faith, in the Spirit of God; and if we live in this Spirit, we shall prove it in our lives.

XLIX

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE EPHESIANS—ST. JOHN

"Brethren, I pray you not to faint at my tribulations for you, which are your glory." (Eph. III, 13.)

After laboring for three years in Ephesus and making many converts, St. Paul was forced to leave the city. Enraged on account of his success, some influential pagans determined to get rid of him. Having gone to Jerusalem, he was persecuted there, and was finally sent to Rome as a prisoner. While in prison there, he wrote his epistle to the Ephesians, praying them not to be disheartened or dejected because of his tribulations, trials, and sufferings. It was written about the year 60 A. D.

I

Ephesus, in St. Paul's time, was the principal city of Asia Minor and a flourishing commercial center. The Temple of Diana, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, was located there. Hence it was the headquarters of pagan worship and idolatrous practices.

The fact that Paul was driven out of Ephesus, afterwards persecuted in Jerusalem, and then sent to a Roman prison had a bad effect on the Christian converts in Ephesus. Realizing this, Paul wrôte a letter to console them in their sufferings, counsel them in their doubts, and instruct them in their duties.

Fearing that they might be discouraged on account of his persecution and imprisonment, he told them to be true to their faith and loyal to the teachings of Jesus Christ.

He asked them not to be astonished or lose the faith on acount of his trials, because the trials, persecutions, and sufferings of the Apostles, bishops, and priests of the Church are our great glory. Let us glory in a Paul in prison, a Peter in chains, a pope or bishop in captivity. Our greatest glory is in the Cross of our Redeemer.

II

Ephesus, from which St. Paul was driven after three years of evangelizing, afterwards became the home of St. John.

John was the youngest of the Apostles. He was known to the other apostles as "the one whom Jesus loved." He was the one who rested his head on the Master's bosom, and when the others fled, followed the Lord and was faithful to Him to the end. He was the one who guarded the Blessed

Virgin, who stood with her at the foot of the Cross, and to whom Our Lord entrusted the guardianship of His Mother.

It is said that St. John and the Virgin Mother lived together in Ephesus, although he lived in Jerusalem some time after the Ascension. While living in Jerusalem he went about Asia Minor preaching in various places.

During his residence in Ephesus he was arrested, taken to Rome, condemned to death, and thrown into a kettle of boiling oil, but came out unharmed. Later Domitian banished him to the island of Patmos. There he was favored with heavenly visions, which are recorded in the last book of the Bible, called the Apocalypse. After Domitian's death, in 96, John returned to Ephesus, where he wrote his first Epistle and later on his Gospel proving Christ's Divinity and silencing the heretics, Cerinthus and Ebioñ.

The great lesson taught us by this Epistle is patience in suffering and love of God. "Brethren," says St. Paul, "I pray you not to faint at my tribulations for you."

Let us ask God for patience in bearing our trials, and let us endeavor to imitate St. John in loving God and our neighbors. "My dear children," says St. John, "love one another."

L

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

VOCATION

"Walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called." (Eph. IV, 1.)

In today's epistle, taken from the fourth chapter of his Epistle to the Ephesians, St. Paul says to the early Christians: "I beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called." By vocation he means, first, the common vocation of the Christian and, secondly, the special vocation of each individual.

I

Vocation comes from *vocare,* to call. Vocation, then, is a calling, a business or profession. The vocation of a Christian is the calling of one away from the world and its allurements to serve God in the spirit as a redeemed child of Christ. Since God made us and gave us everything we have, and since Christ gave His life for us, it is but proper that we live lives worthy of our high vocation as children of God and brothers of Christ. We must live lives

worthy of our vocation, worthy of our hope, worthy of holy Church, worthy of heavenly glory, worthy of Our Lord Jesus Christ, worthy of Christians.

A Christian is a follower of Christ. He is one who has not only been called to follow Jesus, but who has been baptized and believes and practices the true religion. He is a being destined before the world was created to enjoy an existence which will continue long after the world will have passed away.

To this is the Christian called. He is called to humility, temperance, and sanctity, not to pride, gluttony, or worldliness. He is called to avoid evil and practice good works. From Christ he received the name Christian that he might imitate Christ, live as He lived, and suffer for His sake when necessary.

Of the Christian St. Paul requires humility, mildness, and patience. "With all humility and mildness, with patience supporting one another in charity." Humility, mildness, and patience are as necessary for the Christians today as they were for the Ephesians 1900 years ago. They increase a person's influence for good and assist in spreading unity, peace, and harmony throughout the community. All Christians, especially all Catholics, should practice these virtues for we know we are members of the one true and only Church, whose unity, universality, and divinity are so clearly ex-

pressed by St. Paul in today's epistle. "One Lord, one faith, one baptism."

II

Besides the common vocation of the Christian, each individual has a special vocation, such as that of farmer, lawyer, doctor, teacher, priest, or religious. Wretched is he who toils at that for which he is unfitted, but happy is he who herds cattle, practices medicines, reads theology or teaches school, if that is his appointed work.

Every condition and every calling has its special duties. Parents and teachers have one kind of duties, children and pupils another. Some obligations bind priests, others the faithful, some bind the married, others the unmarried. The highest of all vocations are vocations to the priesthood and to the religious life.

Besides the external vocation to the priesthood by the lawful ecclesiastical authority in the name of God, an internal vocation or call is also necessary. It is not sufficient for his parents, his pastor, or his teacher to want a boy to become a priest. The young man must not attempt to enter that holy state unless he feels that it is God's will, that God calls him. To consecrate one's self to the service of God one must not only have the requisite gifts of body and mind, but must also feel certain that it is the will of God.

The will of God regarding a call to the priesthood is manifested in various ways. It is not always as plain and evident as was the call to St. Paul on the road to Damascus. It usually becomes known by the desire to think highly of the priesthood, to love to be around the sanctuary, and to do good to one's fellow men. Two chief requisites are piety and knowledge, with a great desire to serve God at the Altar. The call comes from God. "Neither doth any man," says St. Paul (Heb. V), "take this honor to himself, but he that is called by God as Aaron was."

To work for God and humanity, to follow in the footsteps of the Master, to teach the ignorant, to aid the needy, to sympathize with the sorrowful, to make sacrifices in the service of religion, to baptize infants, to forgive the contrite of heart, to offer the Holy Sacrifice,—this is but a part of the work of the priest of God. His greatest work is to devote his life to alleviate the suffering of mankind. "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends." This the true priest of God is ever ready to do. A boy or young man could aspire to no better work, no higher profession, no nobler vocation than that of the priesthood.

The vocation to a religious life for girls corresponds in a measure to the vocation to the priesthood for boys. The call should come from God.

It is manifested by a desire to lead a more perfect life by the practice of poverty, chastity, and obedience. "If thou wilt be perfect," says our Divine Lord, "go sell what thou hast and come follow me."

The great object of the religious life is the imitation of Jesus Christ by the fulfilment of His precepts and counsels. The principal duty of man is to gain for himself life's highest good, and in return confer this good upon others. Nowhere can one perform this great duty with more certainty than in the priesthood or in the religious life.

The young man or the young woman who wants to work for God and humanity in the highest vocation in the world should seek the advice of the pastor as to the marks of a genuine vocation. To devote one's life to the work for which Christ came upon earth, to co-operate with Christ in the salvation of souls, to educate the young, to visit the sick, to alleviate the suffering of humanity, and to go about doing good is the work of the priest and the religious. If we devote our lives to this work of God, we are walking worthy of our vocation and are beginning here in time that sweet occupation which will constitute our happiness in eternity.

LI

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

GRACE—THE SACRAMENTS

"Brethren, I give thanks to my God always for you for the grace of God that is given you in Christ Jesus." (1 Cor. I, 8.)

GRATITUDE is a most commendable virtue, ingratitude a base vice. Gratitude for benefits received keeps them fresh in the memory, deserves other benefits, and merits a reward in the next world. Ingratitude renders evil for good, conceals benefits received, or does not recognize benefits as coming from God.

St. Paul in today's epistle recognizes the benefits conferred upon the Corinthians and thanks God for them.

I

Ungrateful sinners refuse the grace of God and trample His Holy Sacraments under foot.

What is grace? The Catechism tells us that grace is a help or gift from God, given to us through the merits of Jesus Christ for our salvation. Like

electricity, it is somewhat difficult to understand, but easily recognized in its effects.

We are told that there are two kinds of grace, sanctifying and actual. Sanctifying grace makes the soul holy and pleasing to God, while actual grace enlightens the mind and moves the will to avoid evil and do good. Sanctifying grace is the permanent condition of the soul after Baptism, which keeps it from offending God. Actual grace is a temporary or momentary help given to the soul, enabling it to perform some act, by enlightening the mind and moving the will.

Jesus Christ died for all men. He wishes all to be saved. In order to be saved, however, man must co-operate with God by using the means offered and fulfilling the conditions appointed by God.

The means instituted by Christ and provided by His Church, by which the merits of the Redeemer are applied to our souls, are the Sacraments. They are the channels by which God's grace, purchased by His Precious Blood, is conveyed to the souls of men. "You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains."

II

As in the natural order man is born, is nourished, grows strong and, if sick, needs proper remedies, so, in the supernatural order there is a birth (Baptism), a nourishing food (the Holy Eucharist),

a strengthening growth (Confirmation), a medicinal remedy against death (Penance), and a balm to heal the wounds of sin (Extreme Unction).

It is evident that Christ instituted the seven Sacraments, for the Apostles were accustomed to administer them. In the twenty-eighth chapter of St. Matthew Our Lord says to His Apostles: "Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." In the eighth chapter of the Acts it is recorded that Philip baptized the Eunuch.

In the same chapter of the Acts we find that St. Paul and St. Peter administered Confirmation to the Samaritans, when "they prayed over them, laid hands on them and they received the Holy Ghost."

Many texts prove the institution of the Holy Eucharist, *e.g.,* the sixth chapter of St. John and the twenty-sixth of St. Matthew, and 1 Cor. X: "The Bread which we break, is it not the communion of the Body of Christ?"

The Sacrament of Penance was instituted when Christ said: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven." (John XX, *22.*)

St. James in his fifth chapter tells us about the administration of Extreme Unction: "Is any man sick among you, let him call in the priest, and let him pray over him and anoint him."

In St. Paul's Epistle to Titus we find the Sacrament of Holy Orders mentioned: "I left thee in

Crete, that thou should ordain priests in every city as I also appointed thee."

The Sacrament of Matrimony was instituted by God between our First Parents and confirmed by Christ when He said: "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder."

As fire burns, as food nourishes, as a seal produces an impression on soft wax, so each one of the seven Sacraments produces on the soul the grace proper to it. In the works of God every sign produces its effect. God had but to say: "Let there be light," and light was made. Christ said to the leper: "Be thou cleansed," and the leprosy left him. In a similar way each Sacrament will produce the effect God intended, provided no obstacle is placed in its way.

Let us resolve to receive the Sacraments with the right disposition. Let us place no obstacle in the way, so that we may receive all the graces and blessings they confer on those well prepared for their reception.

LII

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

RENEWAL OF SPIRIT

"Brethren, be ye renewed in the spirit of your mind." (Eph. IV, 23.)

When St. Paul in today's epistle, taken from the fourth chapter of his Letter to the Ephesians, exhorted those early Christians to be renewed in the spirit, he manifested a thorough understanding of human nature. This renewal of spirit so necessary to the Ephesians, is necessary also for the Christians of the present time. It consists in laying off the old man and putting on the new, in avoiding evil and doing good, in self-examination and reformation.

I

No one in this world is perfect. We should, however, strive to become as perfect as possible. "Be ye perfect," says Our Divine Lord," as your heavenly Father is perfect."

In religious communities, where the members become as nearly perfect as it is possible for mortals here below, besides the renewal of spirit by means

of the morning meditation, Holy Communion, daily examination of conscience, weekly confession, there is usually an annual eight-day retreat, during which the members examine their past in silence, solitude, meditation, and prayer, and resolve to remove from their lives everything that would be detrimental to their soul's salvation.

If this renewal of the spirit is necessary for those who lead a religious life, it is much more necessary for people living in the world. As an artist works day after day and month after month on some great work of art, until he has it as perfect as he can make it, so the Christian should work day after day and month after month, striving to become perfect.

Many years ago, when I was at the University of Notre Dame, the great Italian artist, Gregori, was painting those wonderful works of art that embellish the University Church and the corridors of the main building of the University. Before starting one of those large paintings, the artist would have a scaffold erected, the place boarded up and kept enclosed under lock and key, until after the lapse of many months the work of art was finished. During that time the artist employed every means and instrument at his command to attain his ideal. He allowed himself no rest until he brought his creation, line by line, trait by trait, in color and tone, to the highest perfection. When his creation was

to his critical eye perfect, the enclosure would be removed and the work exposed to the admiring gaze of the public.

The Christian, like the artist, should work incessantly and never rest until the image of God, deformed by sin, is restored to his soul, and he has, by this renewal of the spirit, attained perfection as far as possible by the imitation of Christ, the Christian ideal.

II

This renewal of the spirit, which has for its end the forming of a new life in us, the changing of habits of sin into habits of virtue, is a great and important work. St. Paul in today's epistle calls it putting off the old man and putting on the new. This putting off the old man, this laying aside of bad habits, sinful affections, and evil impulses, is a difficult thing. It is something man can not do without the help of God. The things pertaining to the old man that are to be put away are lying, anger, injustice, and dishonesty. When we put on the new man, we clothe ourselves with the opposite virtues,—truth, patience, gentleness, justice, charity, and honesty. "Putting away lying, speak ye the truth every man with his neighbor, for we are members, one of another." As the members of our body do not deceive one another, as the eye does not deceive the foot, as the tongue does not deceive the

stomach, so we Christians, who are members of one body, should not deceive one another, but should be truthful and loyal in helping one another at all times and under all circumstances.

Be true to truth. "The fairest name that honest worth can win, is soiled and tarnished past reclaim when falsehood enters in." The language of the world, the language of politicians, the language of diplomacy, is the language of deception. The language of the children of God is the language of truth. According to the Saints, the Christians should rather die than tell a deliberate lie.

When St. Paul tells us, "Be angry and sin not," we learn that there is such a thing as righteous indignation. If the anger is guided by reason and faith, it may even lead to virtue. Our Lord was angry when he found the money changers desecrating the holy Temple. Parents are angry when children disobey them and break God's Commandments. Such anger is just because guided by reason and faith. But anger should not be allowed to remain in the mind. "Let not the sun go down on thy anger." Instead of being angry with another and holding hatred against him, we should live in brotherly charity with all.

Closely united with this brotherly charity is honesty—justice, giving everyone his due. The members of the old man, lying, anger, and revenge, often are the cause of injustice and dishonesty on

account of damage caused by those guilty of lying, anger, and revenge. Hence St. Paul adds, "Let him that stole, steal now no more, but rather let him labor, that he may have something to give those that suffereth need."

Justice and charity are two virtues that shine brightly in the Christian firmament. Thousands of members of our Church devote their lives to pure, self-sacrificing charity. As a result of their renewal of spirit, of their casting off the old man and putting on the new, of their spirit of service and sacrifice, of their noble charity, you behold countless convents, orphanages, schools, hospitals, and homes for the cure of every ill to which flesh is heir. All this is the fruit of St. Paul's words, "Let him labor that he may have something to give to him who suffereth need." Truth, patience, justice and charity are manifestations of a renewal of spirit.

LIII

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

TEMPERANCE

"Be not drunk with wine wherein is luxury." (Eph. V, 17.)

St. Paul warns the Ephesians against the sin of drunkenness. Time spent in drinking, carousing, and luxurious living is wasted, causes a man to become useless, and destroys his power for work. Excessive drinking leads to impure desires and gambling or sloth.

I

Intemperance is the inordinate love and immoderate use of food or drink. When it refers to intoxicating liquor, it is more frequently called drunkenness, which is the immoderate use of intoxicating drink to such an extent as to deprive one of the use of reason.

Drunkenness is a grievous sin. A man who voluntarily deprives himself of the use of reason without a grave cause acts against his rational nature. He lowers himself to the level of the brute

and degrades the image of God that is in him. It is no sin, no crime to be a beast; but is it not a grievous sin, a grave crime for a man to make a beast of himself?

Holy Scripture tells us of the grievousness of the sin of drunkenness. St. Paul says that "neither the impure, nor idolaters, nor drunkards shall possess the kingdom of God." (1 Cor. VI, 9.)

Drunkards insult and outrage God beyond measure by preferring their low passion to Him and by making, as the same Apostle says, "a god of their belly."

Drunkenness or gluttony is rightly numbered among the capital sins because it is the source of a multitude of other sins. Impurity, blasphemy, quarreling, and murder are its daughters.

In itself drunkenness is a shameful and degrading sin, while in its effects it is deplorable, carrying in its train untold poverty, misery, sin, sorrow, and suffering.

II

It is absolutely necessary for the drunkard to abstain from intoxicating drink and practice the virtue of temperance. If he does not conquer this vice, he cannot save his soul. It is a serious vice, the source of other grievous sins and a habit very difficult to conquer. With God's grace and a strong will this or any other bad habit can be overcome.

Many have been saved from this vice by avoiding occasions of sin and following the inspirations of God's grace.

Temperance is the virtue that is directly opposed to the vice of intemperance. Temperance restrains our desires in the use of things that give pleasure to the senses and assist us in using them in moderation. Temperance has as companion virtues: sobriety, chastity, humility, and kindness.

Temperance, moderation in all things, especially in eating and drinking, is a great Christian virtue, as intemperance is a great vice. To live soberly, not to be guilty of excesses in eating and drinking, to be temperate in all things, is to be a true follower of Jesus Christ, who set us a perfect example of temperance.

He who follows the teachings of Jesus Christ and His church will practice the virtue of temperance. God's grace is all-powerful. His Sacraments and prayer will obtain from above the grace necessary to lead a pure and temperate life. Frequent reception of the Sacraments and regular devout prayer are necessary in fighting temptation.

"Brethren, be sober and watch," is St. Peter's advice to all Christians of all ages; while St. Paul warns all in today's epistle: "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is luxury."

LIV

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE CHRISTIAN'S WARFARE

"And take unto you the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God." (Eph. VI, 17.)

Long before the coming of Our Saviour, there lived in the land of Hus a man whose name was Job. He was a good, holy, God-fearing man. Speaking of the trials, sorrows, and sufferings of man here in this world, he calls the life of man a warfare.

I

Today's epistle, taken from the sixth chapter of St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians, emphasizes the importance of the Christian's warfare in this world. In it we have a declaration of war against our spiritual enemies,—the world, the flesh, and the devil. The world with its treasures and pleasures is continually attracting man and leading him away from the eternal treasures and pleasures that God has in store for him.

The allurements of the flesh cause many to deviate from the straight and narrow way that leads to

God, while Satan, in league with the flesh and the world, smiles upon and caresses him in order to delude and ensnare him.

Man's spiritual enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil, usually appear in the form of various sins, the principal of which are called the seven deadly or capital sins.

II

The seven capital sins are pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, and sloth. They are called capital sins because they are the sources of all others.

Pride is the beginning of evil. It was the sin of Lucifer and the fallen angels. It was also the sin of our First Parents.

Pride exists in us from the beginning and is a direct effect of original sin. It grows with our growth, increases with our years, and if not checked, will gain such headway that we shall find it difficult, if not impossible, to eradicate it.

Pride is inordinate self-esteem. This is contrary to the First Commandment. The proud person thinks more of himself than he does of God.

Pride is the source of hypocrisy, conceit, excessive love of dress, and ill-treatment of others. The proud person thinks he is better than others, while the humble man, knowing himself, values himself accordingly.

Covetousness or avarice is too great a love for the things of the world. It is contrary to the Tenth Commandment, which bids us be content with what we can honestly get. Dishonesty, theft, uncharitableness are the daughters of covetousness.

Lust is a desire for sins of the flesh. It is forbidden by the Sixth and Ninth Commandments. Impure thoughts, words, and actions are sins of lust.

Anger is forbidden by the Fifth Commandment. It is the source of hatred, revenge, quarrels and murder.

Gluttony, the sin of eating or drinking to excess, is also against the Fifth Commandment. The drunkard is a glutton. Drunkenness and its companions, dishonesty and impurity, are three grievous sins, against which we should continually wage war.

Envy, which is a sin against the Eight Commandment, is displeasure on account of the good fortune of another.

Sloth is laziness in serving God. It is a sin against the First Commandment, because the slothful person is too lazy to attend to his duty to God.

The Christian must wage a continual warfare against these capital sins—against the world, the flesh, and the devil. If he tries to eradicate his sins without attacking the capital sin that is their source, he cuts off the branches without striking at the root.

In order to lead his troops to victory, the captain must know the strength of the enemy and make his attack with intelligence and vigor. So, too, the Christian soldier must know the strength of the enemy—the world, the flesh, and the devil—must put on the armor of God, must co-operate with His grace, and he will overcome temptations, lead a good life, and gain a victory in the Christian warfare.

LV

THE TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE PRAISE AND GLORY OF GOD

"That you may be filled with the fruit of Justice, through Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God." (Phil. I, 11.)

THE end of the universe is the praise and glory of God. We can do nothing better, nothing more glorious, nothing more blessed than to praise and glorify God. We praise and glorify God by word and example, especially by leading a good Christian life, by doing our duty to our fellow man and to God.

I

We glorify God by word and example when we do nothing and say nothing to offend Him. St. Paul, in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Philippians, prays that they "may be filled with the fruit of justice, through Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." Filled with the fruit of justice, they will be true Christians and true men.

True manhood is the result of self-knowledge and self-mastery.

The knowledge and mastery of self will assist in forming a true conscience and in developing a strong character.

The development of character may be compared to the building of a church. The architect draws the plans and makes the specifications. If the masons and other workmen carefully follow the plans and specifications the building will assume the grace, the symmetry and the beauty designed by the architect.

In the building of character, the architect is God. He made the plans and specifications. To assist in the work of building our character God has given us our parents, our church, and our school. But we are the workmen. We must do the work according to the plans and specifications. If we do, our character will assume the grace, symmetry, and beauty intended by the great Architect.

II

Endeavor to follow carefully the plans and specifications of the great Architect for the building of your character. To young men especially I would say: Dedicate yourselves to God in your youth. Give Him the first fruits of your young manhood. First fruits are always best.

The first flowers of the spring are the most pleasing; the first vegetables are the most palatable; and the firstlings of the flock are the choicest. So,

too, our earliest years are the best and should be given to God and His service, not to the world and its allurements.

God has always seemed to manifest a special affection for young men. David was but a youth when he was chosen to be the means of delivering the people of God from the hands of their enemies; John the Baptist was a young man when God confided to him one of the greatest works ever entrusted to man; John, the Apostle, was the youngest of the twelve, yet he was the one specially loved by the Master.

If we examine the lives of David, John the Baptist, and John the Apostle, we shall find that the virtues which characterized them were the virtues of true manhood—the virtues of truth, of purity, of temperance, and of honesty. These are the virtues necessary for the building of a strong character.

Following St. Paul's advice in today's epistle and imitating his life will assist in forming a strong character. St. Paul's life and works are an inspiration. He denied himself and made great sacrifices in order to lead souls to God.

After his conversion he was zealous for God's praise and glory. He had charity for all, malice towards none.

Imitate St. Paul's life after his conversion. Imi-

tate his manliness, his courage, his purity, his honesty, his fidelity to conscience, his strong manly character. Be kind, charitable, forgiving, zealous for God's praise and glory. The end of man, the end of all creation is the honor, praise, and glory to God.

LVI

ALL SAINTS

THE BEATITUDES

"Brethren, be followers of me." (Phil. III, 71.)

After Paul's remarkable conversion he was a true and faithful follower of the Master. When he asks the Philippians to take him as a model, he means that they should be followers of him, as he was a faithful follower of Christ, the way, the truth, and the life. Like St. Paul, all the Saints fashioned their lives after the Divine Model. The beautiful teachings of the Beatitudes shone forth resplendently in the lives of all the Saints.

I

Some of the most useful, beautiful, and elevating of the teachings of Our Divine Saviour are contained in the Sermon on the Mount. Perhaps the most practical portion of that well-known sermon is that called the Beatitudes. If we wish to be happy here and hereafter, we must put into practice the lessons taught by the eight Beatitudes.

The Beatitudes point out the way to peace, joy,

and contentment in this world. They also contain the substance of joy eternal. They mark the beginning here of that joy and happiness that will be fully developed in Heaven. The rewards mentioned in the Beatitudes will be fully realized in the future life.

When Our Divine Lord taught the Beatitudes, He wished to impress upon man the characteristic virtues of Christianity,—humility, poverty, meekness, justice, mercy, purity, peace, and mortification. In declaring those blessed who follow the path He indicates, He undoubtedly means blessed in Heaven: they shall see God, theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

The virtues taught by Jesus Christ in the eight Beatitudes are the virtues practiced by the Saints. It was by practicing these virtues that they became Saints. Examine their lives, and you will find that humility was a fundamental virtue in all of them. Except those who died in infancy, there is not a Saint, not an inhabitant of Heaven, who did not gain his heavenly reward by practicing the virtues taught by the eight Beatitudes.

II

When Our Lord says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven," He does not mean that those who do not possess goods of this world will go to Heaven but that those who are detached from the things of the world and center their

thoughts and affections on Heaven, are sure of a future reward. The Saints despising earthly things were poor in spirit and in this way purchased Heaven.

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land," means that meekness, mildness, kindness, or gentleness, which is a result of charity, will be rewarded by contentment here and eternal happiness hereafter.

By the Beatitude "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted," we are to understand that for the follower of Christ, sorrow for sin, grief of the soul and tears of compunction are a blessing, a source of happiness. God gives Himself to the sorrowful loving heart that seeks Him.

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall be filled." All great and holy souls desire justice. Our souls were created for justice, for the true, the beautiful, and the good. Seeking God and His justice brings real happiness.

God's mercy infinitely repays ours; hence, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." Charity to others is godlike.

Impurity causes spiritual blindness. "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God." Peace is the possession of the true follower of the Prince of Peace, whose conscience being clear, is at peace with God and man. Having peace with themselves and others, it may be said of them,

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God."

"Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The Apostles, the martyrs, all the Saints, and Catholics in many lands suffered and are suffering for their God and their faith. Having been deemed worthy to suffer "for justice' sake," they are entitled to be called "blessed." Their sufferings, patiently borne, made them happy here and hereafter.

Man is made for happiness and can attain it by doing his duty. Following the path of duty and observing the virtues taught by Our Lord in the eight Beatitudes, he will attain a greater happiness, a higher degree of sanctity, and will merit a place of glory in the next world in the company of all the Saints.

LVII

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

ENEMIES OF THE CROSS

"They are enemies of the cross of Christ whose end is destruction . . . who mind earthly things." (Phil. III, 18.)

ENEMIES of the Cross of Christ exist today, as they did in St. Paul's day. They forget the eternal and seek temporal things. Their hearts are centered on the things of this world. They give little or no thought to God and eternity.

I

Who are the enemies of the Cross of Christ? St. Paul tells us in this epistle. They are those whose god is their belly, and who are excessively addicted to earthly things. By those whose "god is their belly," St. Paul means those who make their appetite the rule of their life, who are continually thinking of what they will have to eat, and care nothing about the more important things.

The person who thinks too much of what he will eat, whose god is his appetite, is an enemy of the

Cross of Christ. He crucifies not his flesh, but the Lord Jesus Christ, as St. Paul says.

He has no moral sense. He will boast of his indulgence in his animal appetite and take pleasure in telling of his evil deeds. He finds his attraction in sinful deeds, disobeys the commandments of God, breaks the precepts of the Church, and has no sense of shame. As St. Paul says, "His glory is in his shame." He is an enemy of the Cross of Christ.

II

St. Paul also tells us that "those who mind earthly things" are also "enemies of the Cross of Christ." They love, desire, and work for earthly possessions. Their minds continually dwell upon and they try in every way honestly or dishonestly to get possession of earthly goods.

Persons who continually seek earthly things, who are neglectful of their eternal welfare, may obey the precepts of the Church outwardly, may keep the Commandments in a way, may be Christians in name; but they are only "nominal Christians," and are in reality enemies of the Cross of Christ.

According to St. Paul, their "end is destruction." They have not made use of the gifts of nature and of grace that God has conferred upon them.

How different is the action of the true Christian. His "conversation is in Heaven." The Christian

religion teaches us to act in a rational manner, with our eyes fixed on Heaven.

The worldly-minded love, seek, and value earthly things. The true Christian loves, seeks, and values heavenly things. Let us endeavor at all times to center our thoughts and affections on the things of Heaven. Let us not make a god of our belly, but let our conversation be in Heaven and our thoughts on God, and we will not be of the number of those who are enemies of the Cross.

LVIII

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE TRIUMPH OF RELIGION

"Brethren, we cease not to pray for you, and to beg you may be filled with the knowledge of the will of God." (Col. I, 9.)

In the first chapter of his Epistle to the Colossians the Apostle prays that they may know and fulfil the will of God. The will of God is our santification. The will of God is the triumph of His religion. It is practically the same as the intention of Pope Pius X, "to re-establish all things in Christ."

I

Heretics had appeared among the Colossians and were trying to undermine their faith. To counteract the errors of these false teachers, St. Paul wrote this Epistle. The false teachers boasted of their great wisdom. St. Paul showed them that Christ possessed all wisdom. He told them of the blessings the Christian religion confers upon true believers. Girded for battle, he attacks the enemy and is sure that he will triumph over him.

Knowledge of God's Will is the blessing Paul asks for the Colossians. He prays, too, that they may walk worthy of God, that their knowledge of God and their good works may be the means of overcoming many evils, and bringing all to believe in the true religion.

St. Paul closes this day's epistle by "giving thanks to God, the Father, who hath made us worthy to be made partakers of the lot of the saints." He means by this that we should give thanks to God, who made us capable, through Baptism, of fellowship in the inheritance of the Saints. Today's epistle gives us an idea of the trials and difficulties of the early Church and of the labors of St. Paul and the other Apostles in contributing to the triumph of religion.

II

As in St. Paul's time, so at all times, the Church has had her enemies and trials. Her life, like that of her Founder, has been and is a succession of trials and triumphs. She has had and still has her Calvaries and Good Fridays, but she also had and has her Thabors and Easter Sundays.

The Church triumphed over the Cæsars, planted the banner of the Cross at the foot of their throne, erected magnificent churches on the ruins of their temples, conquered the northern barbarians by the sweet teaching of charity, and extended her spiritual jurisdiction beyond the limits of the Old World to

sow the seed of enlightment, morality, and religion in this glorious "land of the free."

The triumph of religion in our own fair land has been as interesting and edifying as in the early Christian ages. The discovery of America was a triumph of religion. It was in every way a religious undertaking. Columbus, after having been refused aid by Genoa, England, Portugal, and Spain, was assisted by the pious man Father Juan Perez and Isabella the Catholic. The motive animating these three religious persons was to carry the blessings of religion to the inhabitants of the new lands to be discovered.

There is no more beautiful page in the history of our country, or of Christianity, than that which records the labors of the Catholic missionaries in North America. The devoted Dominicans, Jesuits, and Franciscans left their impression on the soil and on the hearts of the country.

The triumphs of religion were many and great during the century from Marquette to the consecration of Bishop Carroll, in 1789. From Bishop Carroll to the illustrious bishops of the present day there has been a long list of learned, apostolic men, and the triumphs of religion have been many, great, varied, and wonderful. That the Church in a little more than a century grew from one bishop, twenty-five priests, and twenty-five thousand members to more than one hundred bishops, twenty thousand

priests, and twenty million members is a triumph of religion for which we should give thanks to God.

Not only in St. Paul's time, then, but at all times, the Church has had her trials and triumphs. As long as men are ignorant of her teachings, as long as deceivers pander to prejudice, so long will the series of her trials and triumphs continue. Let us, with St. Paul, pray that all may have a deeper knowledge of the will of God and, knowing His Will, assist with greater earnestness in the triumph of religion.

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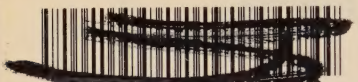

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